

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

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## THE MOONSTONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," &c. &c.

SECOND PERIOD. THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUTH. (1848—1849.)

FOURTH NARRATIVE.

*Extracted from the Journal of Ezra Jennings.*

1849.—June 15th. . . . With some interruption from patients, and some interruption from pain, I finished my letter to Miss Verinder in time for to-day's post. I failed to make it as short a letter as I could have wished. But I think I have made it plain. It leaves her entirely mistress of her own decision. If she consents to assist the experiment, she consents of her own free will, and not as a favour to Mr. Franklin Blake or to me.

June 16th.—Rose late, after a dreadful night; the vengeance of yesterday's opium, pursuing me through a series of frightful dreams. At one time, I was whirling through empty space with the phantoms of the dead, friends and enemies together. At another, the one beloved face which I shall never see again, rose at my bedside, hideously phosphorescent in the black darkness, and glared and grinned at me. A slight return of the old pain, at the usual time in the early morning, was welcome as a change. It dispelled the visions—and it was bearable because it did that.

My bad night made it late in the morning, before I could get to Mr. Franklin Blake. I found him stretched on the sofa, breakfasting on brandy and soda water, and a dry biscuit.

"I am beginning, as well as you could possibly wish," he said. "A miserable, restless night; and a total failure of appetite this morning. Exactly what happened last year, when I gave up my cigars. The sooner I am ready for my second dose of laudanum, the better I shall be pleased."

"You shall have it on the earliest possible day," I answered. "In the meantime, we must be as careful of your health as we can. If we allow you to become exhausted, we shall fail in that way. You must get an appetite for your dinner. In other words, you must get a ride or a walk this morning, in the fresh air."

"I will ride, if they can find me a horse here. By-the-bye, I wrote to Mr. Bruff yesterday. Have you written to Miss Verinder?"

"Yes—by last night's post."

"Very good. We shall have some news worth hearing, to tell each other to-morrow. Don't go yet! I have a word to say to you. You appeared to think, yesterday, that our experiment with the opium was not likely to be viewed very favourably by some of my friends. You were quite right. I call old Gabriel Betteredge, one of my friends; and you will be amused to hear that he protested strongly when I saw him yesterday. 'You have done a wonderful number of foolish things in the course of your life, Mr. Franklin; but this tops them all!' There is Betteredge's opinion! You will make allowance for his prejudices, I am sure, if you and he happen to meet."

I left Mr. Blake, to go my rounds among my patients; feeling the better and the happier even for the short interview that I had had with him.

What is this secret of the attraction that there is for me in this man? Does it only mean that I feel the contrast between the frankly kind manner in which he has allowed me to become acquainted with him, and the merciless dislike and distrust with which I am met by other people? Or is there really something in him which answers to the yearning that I have for a little human sympathy—the yearning, which has survived the solitude and persecution of many years; which seems to grow keener and keener, as the time comes nearer and nearer when I shall endure and feel no more? How useless to ask these questions! Mr. Blake has given me a new interest in life. Let that be enough, without seeking to know what the new interest is.

June 17th.—Before breakfast, this morning, Mr. Candy informed me that he was going away for a fortnight, on a visit to a friend in the south of England. He gave me as many special directions, poor fellow, about the patients, as if he still had the large practice which he possessed before he was taken ill. The practice is worth little enough now! Other doctors have superseded him; and nobody who can help it will employ me.

It is perhaps fortunate that he is to be away just at this time. He would have been mortified

if I had not informed him of the experiment which I am going to try with Mr. Blake. And I hardly know what undesirable results might not have happened, if I had taken him into my confidence. Better as it is. Unquestionably, better as it is.

The post brought me Miss Verinder's answer, after Mr. Candy had left the house.

A charming letter! It gives me the highest opinion of her. There is no attempt to conceal the interest that she feels in our proceedings. She tells me, in the prettiest manner, that my letter has satisfied her of Mr. Blake's innocence, without the slightest need (so far as she is concerned) of putting my assertion to the proof. She even upbraids herself—most undeservedly, poor thing!—for not having divined at the time what the true solution of the mystery might really be. The motive underlying all this, proceeds evidently from something more than a generous eagerness to make atonement for a wrong which she has innocently inflicted on another person. It is plain that she has loved him, throughout the estrangement between them. In more than one place, the rapture of discovering that he has deserved to be loved, breaks its way innocently through the stoutest formalities of pen and ink, and even defies the stronger restraint still of writing to a stranger. Is it possible (I ask myself, in reading this delightful letter) that I, of all men in the world, am chosen to be the means of bringing these two young people together again? My own happiness has been trampled under foot; my own love has been torn from me. Shall I live to see a happiness of others, which is of my making—a love renewed, which is of my bringing back? Oh merciful Death, let me see it before your arms enfold me, before your voice whispers to me, 'Rest at last!'

There are two requests contained in the letter. One of them prevents me from showing it to Mr. Franklin Blake. I am authorised to tell him that Miss Verinder willingly consents to place her house at our disposal; and, that said, I am desired to add no more.

So far, it is easy to comply with her wishes. But the second request embarrasses me seriously.

Not content with having written to Mr. Betteredge, instructing him to carry out whatever directions I may have to give, Miss Verinder asks leave to assist me, by personally superintending the restoration of her own sitting-room. She only waits a word of reply from me, to make the journey to Yorkshire, and to be present as one of the witnesses on the night when the opium is tried for the second time.

Here, again, there is a motive under the surface; and, here again, I fancy that I can find it out.

What she has forbidden me to tell Mr. Franklin Blake, she is (as I interpret it) eager to tell him with her own lips, *before* he is put to the test which is to vindicate his character in the eyes of other people. I under-

stand and admire this generous anxiety to acquit him, without waiting until his innocence may, or may not, be proved. It is the atonement that she is longing to make, poor girl, after having innocently and inevitably wronged him. But the thing cannot be done. I have no sort of doubt that the agitation which a meeting between them would produce on both sides—the old feelings which it would revive, the new hopes which it would awaken—would, in their effect on the mind of Mr. Blake, be almost certainly fatal to the success of our experiment. It is hard enough, as things are, to reproduce in him the conditions as they existed, or nearly as they existed, last year. With new interests and new emotions to agitate him, the attempt would be simply useless.

And yet, knowing this, I cannot find it in my heart to disappoint her. I must try if I can discover some new arrangement, before post-time, which will allow me to say Yes to Miss Verinder, without damage to the service which I have bound myself to render to Mr. Franklin Blake.

Two o'clock.—I have just returned from my round of medical visits; having begun, of course, by calling at the hotel.

Mr. Blake's report of the night is the same as before. He has had some intervals of broken sleep, and no more. But he feels it less to-day, having slept after yesterday's dinner. This after-dinner sleep is the result, no doubt, of the ride which I advised him to take. I fear I shall have to curtail his restorative exercise in the fresh air. He must not be too well; he must not be too ill. It is a case (as the sailors would say) of very fine steering.

He has not heard yet from Mr. Bruff. I found him eager to know if I had received any answer from Miss Verinder.

I told him exactly what I was permitted to tell, and no more. It was quite needless to invent excuses for not showing him the letter. He told me bitterly enough, poor fellow, that he understood the delicacy which disengaged me to produce it. "She consents, of course, as a matter of common courtesy and common justice," he said. "But she keeps her own opinion of me, and waits to see the result." I was sorely tempted to hint that he was now wronging her as she had wronged him. On reflection, I shrank from forestalling her in the double luxury of surprising and forgiving him.

My visit was a very short one. After the experience of the other night, I have been compelled once more to give up my dose of opium. As a necessary result, the agony of the disease that is in me has got the upper hand again. I felt the attack coming on, and left abruptly, so as not to alarm or distress him. It only lasted a quarter of an hour this time, and it left me strength enough to go on with my work.

Five o'clock.—I have written my reply to Miss Verinder.

The arrangement I have proposed reconciles the interests on both sides, if she will only consent to it. After first stating the objections that there are to a meeting between Mr. Blake and herself, before the experiment is tried, I have suggested that she should so time her journey as to arrive at the house privately, on the evening when we make the attempt. Travelling by the afternoon train from London, she would delay her arrival until nine o'clock. At that hour, I have undertaken to see Mr. Blake safely into his bedchamber; and so to leave Miss Verinder free to occupy her own rooms until the time comes for administering the laudanum. When that has been done, there can be no objection to her watching the result, with the rest of us. On the next morning, she shall show Mr. Blake (if she likes) her correspondence with me, and shall satisfy him in that way that he was acquitted in her estimation, before the question of his innocence was put to the proof.

In that sense, I have written to her. This is all that I can do to-day. To-morrow I must see Mr. Betteredge, and give the necessary directions for re-opening the house.

June 18th.—Late again, in calling on Mr. Franklin Blake. More of that horrible pain in the early morning; followed, this time, by complete prostration, for some hours. I foresee, in spite of the penalties which it exacts from me, that I shall have to return to the opium for the hundredth time. If I had only myself to think of, I should prefer the sharp pains to the frightful dreams. But the physical suffering exhausts me. If I let myself sink, it may end in my becoming useless to Mr. Blake at the time when he wants me most.

It was nearly one o'clock, before I could get to the hotel to-day. The visit, even in my shattered condition, proved to be a most amusing one—thanks entirely to the presence on the scene of Gabriel Betteredge.

I found him in the room, when I went in. He withdrew to the window and looked out, while I put my first customary question to my patient. Mr. Blake had slept badly again, and he felt the loss of rest this morning more than he had felt it yet.

I asked next if he had heard from Mr. Bruff.

A letter had reached him that morning. Mr. Bruff expressed the strongest disapproval of the course which his friend and client was taking under my advice. It was mischievous—for it excited hopes that might never be realised. It was quite unintelligible to *his* mind, except that it looked like a piece of trickery, akin to the trickery of mesmerism, clairvoyance, and the like. It unsettled Miss Verinder's house, and it would end in unsettling Miss Verinder herself. He had put the case (without mentioning names) to an eminent physician; and the eminent physician had smiled, had shaken his head, and had said—nothing. On these

grounds, Mr. Bruff entered his protest, and left it there.

My next inquiry related to the subject of the Diamond. Had the lawyer produced any evidence to prove that the jewel was in London?

No, the lawyer had simply declined to discuss the question. He was himself satisfied that the Moonstone had been pledged to Mr. Luker. His eminent absent friend, Mr. Murthwaite (whose consummate knowledge of the Indian character no one could deny), was satisfied also. Under these circumstances, and with the many demands already made on him, he must decline entering into any disputes on the subject of evidence. Time would show; and Mr. Bruff was willing to wait for time.

It was quite plain—even if Mr. Blake had not made it plainer still by reporting the substance of the letter, instead of reading what was actually written—that distrust of *me* was at the bottom of all this. Having myself foreseen that result, I was neither mortified nor surprised. I asked Mr. Blake if his friend's protest had shaken him. He answered emphatically, that it had not produced the slightest effect on his mind. I was free after that to dismiss Mr. Bruff from consideration—and I did dismiss him, accordingly.

A pause in the talk between us, followed—and Gabriel Betteredge came out from his retirement at the window.

"Can you favour me with your attention, sir?" he inquired, addressing himself to me.

"I am quite at your service," I answered.

Betteredge took a chair and seated himself at the table. He produced a huge old-fashioned leather pocket-book, with a pencil of dimensions to match. Having put on his spectacles, he opened the pocket-book, at a blank page, and addressed himself to me once more.

"I have lived," said Betteredge, looking at me sternly, "nigh on fifty years in the service of my late lady. I was page-boy before that, in the service of the old lord, her father. I am now somewhere between seventy and eighty years of age—never mind exactly where! I am reckoned to have got as pretty a knowledge and experience of the world as most men. And what does it all end in? It ends, Mr. Ezra Jennings, in a conjuring trick being performed on Mr. Franklin Blake, by a doctor's assistant with a bottle of laudanum—and by the living jingo, I'm appointed, in my old age, to be conjuror's boy!"

Mr. Blake burst out laughing. I attempted to speak. Betteredge held up his hand, in token that he had not done yet.

"Not a word, Mr. Jennings!" he said. "It don't want a word, sir, from you. I have got my principles, thank God. If an order comes to me, which is own brother to an order come from Bedlam, it don't matter. So long as I get it from my master or mistress, as the case may be, I obey it. I may have my own opinion, which is also, you will please to remember the opinion of Mr. Bruff—the Great Mr. Bruff!"

said Betteredge, raising his voice, and shaking his head at me solemnly. "It don't matter; I withdraw my opinion, for all that. My young lady says, 'Do it.' And I say, 'Miss, it shall be done.' Here I am, with my book and my pencil—the latter not pointed so well as I could wish, but when Christians take leave of their senses, who is to expect that pencils will keep their points? Give me your orders, Mr. Jennings. I'll have them in writing, sir. I'm determined not to be behind 'em, or before 'em, by so much as a hairsbreadth. I'm a blind agent—that's what I am. A blind agent!" repeated Betteredge, with infinite relish of his own description of himself.

"I am very sorry," I began, "that you and I don't agree—"

"Don't bring *me*, into it!" interposed Betteredge. "This is not a matter of agreement, it's a matter of obedience. Issue your directions, sir—issue your directions!"

Mr. Blake made me a sign to take him at his word. I "issued my directions" as plainly and as gravely as I could.

"I wish certain parts of the house to be reopened," I said, "and to be furnished, exactly as they were furnished at this time last year."

Betteredge gave his imperfectly-pointed pencil a preliminary lick with his tongue. "Name the parts, Mr. Jennings!" he said loftily.

"First, the inner hall, leading to the chief staircase."

"First, the inner hall," Betteredge wrote. "Impossible to furnish that, sir, as it was furnished last year—to begin with."

"Why?"

"Because there was a stuffed buzzard, Mr. Jennings, in the hall last year. When the family left, the buzzard was put away with the other things. When the buzzard was put away—he burst."

"We will except the buzzard then."

Betteredge took a note of the exception. "The inner hall to be furnished again, as furnished last year. A burst buzzard alone excepted." Please to go on, Mr. Jennings."

"The carpet to be laid down on the stairs, as before."

"The carpet to be laid down on the stairs, as before." Sorry to disappoint you, sir. But that can't be done either."

"Why not?"

"Because the man who laid that carpet down, is dead, Mr. Jennings—and the like of him for reconciling together a carpet and a corner, is not to be found in all England, look where you may."

"Very well. We must try the next best man in England."

Betteredge took another note; and I went on issuing my directions.

"Miss Verinder's sitting-room to be restored exactly to what it was last year. Also, the corridor leading from the sitting-room to the first landing. Also, the second corridor, leading from the second landing to the best bedrooms.

Also, the bedroom occupied last June by Mr. Franklin Blake."

Betteredge's blunt pencil followed me conscientiously, word by word. "Go on, sir," he said, with sardonic gravity. "There's a deal of writing left in the point of this pencil yet."

I told him that I had no more directions to give. "Sir," said Betteredge, "in that case, I have a point or two to put on my own behalf." He opened the pocket-book at a new page, and gave the inexhaustible pencil another preliminary lick.

"I wish to know," he began, "whether I may, or may not, wash my hands—"

"You may decidedly," said Mr. Blake. "I'll ring for the waiter."

"—of certain responsibilities," pursued Betteredge, impenetrably declining to see anybody in the room but himself and me. "As to Miss Verinder's sitting-room, to begin with. When we took up the carpet last year, Mr. Jennings, we found a surprising quantity of pins. Am I responsible for putting back the pins?"

"Certainly not."

Betteredge made a note of that concession, on the spot.

"As to the first corridor next," he resumed. "When we moved the ornaments in that part, we moved a statue of a fat naked child—profanely described in the catalogue of the house as 'Cupid, god of Love.' He had two wings last year, in the fleshy part of his shoulders. My eye being off him, for the moment, he lost one of them. Am I responsible for Cupid's wing?"

I made another concession, and Betteredge made another note.

"As to the second corridor," he went on. "There having been nothing in it, last year, but the doors of the rooms (to everyone of which I can swear, if necessary), my mind is easy, I admit, respecting that part of the house only. But, as to Mr. Franklin's bedroom (if that is to be put back to what it was before), I want to know who is responsible for keeping it in a perpetual state of litter, no matter how often it may be set right—his trousers here, his towels there, and his French novels everywhere—I say, who is responsible for untidying the tidiness of Mr. Franklin's room, him or me?"

Mr. Blake declared that he would assume the whole responsibility with the greatest pleasure. Betteredge obstinately declined to listen to any solution of the difficulty, without first referring it to my sanction and approval. I accepted Mr. Blake's proposal; and Betteredge made a last entry in the pocket-book to that effect.

"Look in when you like, Mr. Jennings, beginning from to-morrow," he said, getting on his legs. "You will find me at work, with the necessary persons to assist me. I respectfully beg to thank you, sir, for overlooking the case of the stuffed buzzard, and the other case of the Cupid's wing—as also for permitting me to wash

my hands of all responsibility in respect of the pins on the carpet, and the litter in Mr. Franklin's room. Speaking as a servant, I am deeply indebted to you. Speaking as a man, I consider you to be a person whose head is full of maggots, and I take up my testimony against your experiment as a delusion and a snare. Don't be afraid, on that account, of my feelings as a man getting in the way of my duty as a servant! You shall be obeyed — the maggots notwithstanding, sir, you shall be obeyed. If it ends in your setting the house on fire, Damme if I send for the engines, unless you ring the bell and order them first!"

With that farewell assurance, he made me a bow, and walked out of the room.

"Do you think we can depend on him?" I asked.

"Implicitly," answered Mr. Blake. "When we go to the house, we shall find nothing neglected, and nothing forgotten."

June 19th. — Another protest against our contemplated proceedings! From a lady this time.

The morning's post brought me two letters. One, from Miss Verinder, consenting, in the kindest manner, to the arrangement that I have proposed. The other from the lady under whose care she is living — one Mrs. Merridew.

Mrs. Merridew presents her compliments, and does not pretend to understand the subject on which I have been corresponding with Miss Verinder, in its scientific bearings. Viewed in its social bearings, however, she feels free to pronounce an opinion. I am probably, Mrs. Merridew thinks, not aware that Miss Verinder is barely nineteen years of age. To allow a young lady, at her time of life, to be present (without a "chaperone") in a house full of men among whom a medical experiment is being carried on, is an outrage on propriety which Mrs. Merridew cannot possibly permit. If the matter is allowed to proceed, she will feel it to be her duty — at a serious sacrifice of her own personal convenience — to accompany Miss Verinder to Yorkshire. Under these circumstances, she ventures to request that I will kindly reconsider the subject; seeing that Miss Verinder declines to be guided by any opinion but mine. Her presence cannot possibly be necessary; and a word from me, to that effect, would relieve both Mrs. Merridew and myself of a very unpleasant responsibility.

Translated from polite commonplace, into plain English, the meaning of this is, as I take it, that Mrs. Merridew stands in mortal fear of the opinion of the world. She has unfortunately appealed to the very last man in existence who has any reason to regard that opinion with respect. I won't disappoint Miss Verinder; and I won't delay a reconciliation between two young people who love each other, and who have been parted too long already. Translated from plain English into polite commonplace, this means that Mr. Jennings presents his compliments to Mrs. Merridew, and regrets that he

cannot feel justified in interfering any farther in the matter.

Mr. Blake's report of himself, this morning, was the same as before. We determined not to disturb Betteredge by overlooking him at the house to-day. To-morrow will be time enough for our first visit of inspection.

June 20th.—Mr. Blake is beginning to feel his continued restlessness at night. The sooner the rooms are refurnished, now, the better.

On our way to the house, this morning, he consulted me, with some nervous impatience and irresolution, about a letter (forwarded to him from London) which he had received from Sergeant Cuff.

The Sergeant writes from Ireland. He acknowledges the receipt (through his housekeeper) of a card and message which Mr. Blake left at his residence near Dorking, and announces his return to England as likely to take place in a week or less. In the meantime, he requests to be favoured with Mr. Blake's reasons for wishing to speak to him (as stated in the message) on the subject of the Moonstone. If Mr. Blake can convict him of having made any serious mistake, in the course of his last year's inquiry concerning the Diamond, he will consider it a duty (after the liberal manner in which he was treated by the late Lady Verinder) to place himself at that gentleman's disposal. If not, he begs permission to remain in his retirement, surrounded by the peaceful floral attractions of a country life.

After reading the letter, I had no hesitation in advising Mr. Blake to inform Sergeant Cuff, in reply, of all that had happened since the inquiry was suspended last year, and to leave him to draw his own conclusions from the plain facts.

On second thoughts, I also suggested inviting the Sergeant to be present at the experiment, in the event of his returning to England in time to join us. He would be a valuable witness to have, in any case; and, if I proved to be wrong in believing the Diamond to be hidden in Mr. Blake's room, his advice might be of great importance, at a future stage of the proceedings over which I could exercise no control. This last consideration appeared to decide Mr. Blake. He promised to follow my advice.

The sound of the hammer informed us that the work of refurnishing was in full progress, as we entered the drive that led to the house.

Betteredge, attired for the occasion in a fisherman's red cap, and an apron of green baize, met us in the outer hall. The moment he saw me, he pulled out the pocket-book and pencil, and obstinately insisted on taking notes of everything that I said to him. Look where we might, we found, as Mr. Blake had foretold, that the work was advancing as rapidly and as intelligently as it was possible to desire. But there was still much to be done in the inner hall, and in Miss Verinder's room. It seemed doubtful whether the house would be ready for us before the end of the week.

Having congratulated Betteredge on the progress that he had made (he persisted in taking notes, every time I opened my lips; declining, at the same time, to pay the slightest attention to anything said by Mr. Blake); and having promised to return for a second visit of inspection in a day or two, we prepared to leave the house, going out by the back way. Before we were clear of the passages down-stairs, I was stopped by Betteredge, just as I was passing the door which led into his own room.

"Could I say two words to you in private?" he asked, in a mysterious whisper.

I consented of course. Mr. Blake walked on to wait for me in the garden, while I accompanied Betteredge into his room. I fully anticipated a demand for certain new concessions, following the precedent already established in the cases of the stuffed buzzard, and the Cupid's wing. To my great surprise, Betteredge laid his hand confidentially on my arm, and put this extraordinary question to me:

"Mr. Jennings, do you happen to be acquainted with Robinson Crusoe?"

I answered that I had read Robinson Crusoe when I was a child.

"Not since then?" inquired Betteredge.

"Not since then."

He fell back a few steps, and looked at me with an expression of compassionate curiosity, tempered by superstitious awe.

"He has not read Robinson Crusoe since he was a child," said Betteredge, speaking to himself—not to me. "Let's try how Robinson Crusoe strikes him now!"

He unlocked a cupboard in a corner, and produced a dirty and dog's-eared book, which exhaled a strong odour of stale tobacco as he turned over the leaves. Having found a passage of which he was apparently in search, he requested me to join him in the corner; still mysteriously confidential, and still speaking under his breath.

"In respect to this hocus-pocus of yours, sir, with the laudanum and Mr. Franklin Blake," he began. "While the workpeople are in the house, my duty as a servant gets the better of my feelings as a man. When the workpeople are gone, my feelings as a man get the better of my duty as a servant. Very good. Last night, Mr. Jennings, it was borne in powerfully on my mind that this new medical enterprise of yours would end badly. If I had yielded to that secret Dictate, I should have put all the furniture away again with my own hands, and have warned the workmen off the premises when they came the next morning."

"I am glad to find, from what I have seen up-stairs," I said, "that you resisted the secret Dictate."

"Resisted isn't the word," answered Betteredge. "Wrestled is the word. I wrestled, sir, between the silent orders in my bosom pulling me one way, and the written orders in my pocket-book pushing me the other, until (saving your presence) I was in a cold sweat.

In that dreadful perturbation of mind and laxity of body, to what remedy did I apply? To the remedy, sir, which has never failed me yet for the last thirty years and more—to This Book!"

He hit the book a sounding blow with his open hand, and struck out of it a stronger smell of stale tobacco than ever.

"What did I find here," pursued Betteredge, "at the first page I opened? This awful bit, sir, page one hundred and seventy-eight, as follows:—'Upon these, and many like Reflections, I afterwards made it a certain rule with me, That whenever I found those secret Hints or Pressings of my Mind, to do, or not doing any Thing that presented; or to going, this Way, or that Way, I never failed to obey the secret Dictate.'—As I live by bread, Mr. Jennings, those were the first words that met my eye, exactly at the time when I myself was setting the secret Dictate at defiance! You don't see anything at all out of the common in that, do you, sir?"

"I see a coincidence—nothing more."

"You don't feel at all shaken, Mr. Jennings, in respect to this medical enterprise of yours?"

"Not the least in the world."

Betteredge stared hard at me, in dead silence. He closed the book with great deliberation; he locked it up again in the cupboard with extraordinary care; he wheeled round, and stared hard at me once more. Then he spoke,

"Sir," he said gravely, "there are great allowances to be made for a man who has not read Robinson Crusoe, since he was a child. I wish you good morning."

He opened his door with a low bow, and left me at liberty to find my own way into the garden. I met Mr. Blake returning to the house.

"You needn't tell me what has happened," he said. "Betteredge has played his last card: he has made another prophetic discovery in Robinson Crusoe. Have you humoured his favourite delusion? No? You have let him see that you don't believe in Robinson Crusoe? Mr. Jennings! you have fallen to the lowest possible place in Betteredge's estimation. Say what you like, and do what you like, for the future. You will find that he won't waste another word on you now."

June 21st.—A short entry must suffice in my journal to-day.

Mr. Blake has had the worst night that he has passed yet. I have been obliged, greatly against my will, to prescribe for him. Men of his sensitive organisation are fortunately quick in feeling the effect of remedial measures. Otherwise, I should be inclined to fear that he will be totally unfit for the experiment, when the time comes to try it.

As for myself, after some little remission of my pains for the last two days, I had an attack this morning, of which I shall say nothing, but that it has decided me to return to the opium.

I shall close this book, and take my full dose—five hundred drops.

June 22nd.—Our prospects look better to-day. Mr. Blake's nervous suffering is greatly allayed. He slept a little last night. *My* night, thanks to the opium, was the night of a man who is stunned. I can't say that I woke this morning; the fitter expression would be, that I recovered my senses.

We drove to the house to see if the refurnishing was done. It will be completed to-morrow—Saturday. As Mr. Blake foretold, Betteredge raised no further obstacles. From first to last, he was ominously polite, and ominously silent.

My medical enterprise (as Betteredge calls it) must now, inevitably, be delayed until Monday next. To-morrow evening, the workmen will be late in the house. On the next day, the established Sunday tyranny which is one of the institutions of this free country, so times the trains as to make it impossible to ask anybody to travel to us from London. Until Monday comes, there is nothing to be done but to watch Mr. Blake carefully, and to keep him, if possible, in the same state in which I find him to-day.

In the meanwhile, I have prevailed on him to write to Mr. Bruff, making a point of it that he shall be present as one of the witnesses. I especially choose the lawyer, because he is strongly prejudiced against us. If we convince him, we place our victory beyond the possibility of dispute.

Mr. Blake has also written to Sergeant Cuff: and I have sent a line to Miss Verinder. With these, and with old Betteredge (who is really a person of importance in the family) we shall have witnesses enough for the purpose—with-out including Mrs. Merridew, if Mrs. Merridew persists in sacrificing herself to the opinion of the world.

June 23rd.—The vengeance of the opium overtook me again last night. No matter; I must go on with it now till Monday is past and gone.

Mr. Blake is not so well again to-day. At two this morning, he confesses that he opened the drawer in which his cigars are put away. He only succeeded in locking it up again by a violent effort. His next proceeding, in case of accident, was to throw the key out of window. The waiter brought it in this morning, discovered at the bottom of an empty cistern—such is Fate! I have taken possession of the key, until Tuesday next.

June 24th.—Mr. Blake and I took a long drive in an open carriage. We both felt beneficially the blessed influence of the soft summer air. I dined with him at the hotel. To my great relief—for I found him in an over-wrought, over-excited state, this morning—he had two hours' sound sleep on the sofa after dinner. If he has another bad night, now—I am not afraid of the consequences.

June 25th, Monday.—The day of the experiment! It is five o'clock in the afternoon. We have just arrived at the house.

#### LEAVES FROM THE MAHOGANY TREE.

##### A SLICE OFF THE JOINT.

HOMER is a great authority on the question how the Greeks of the heroic ages cooked their meat. May we, therefore, be pardoned if we stop on the threshold of our article to make a remark or two about the probable profession of "blind old Maenides," before we proceed to prove the poet's truly English predilection for roast beef?

We have been recently informed, by our wide-read and energetic friend Dreikopf, that the learned world of Germany has, for the last fifteen years, been literally torn to pieces by a tremendous and apparently inexhaustible controversy on this question carried on between the sagacious Bopp of Jena, and the erudite Klopp of Heidelberg. No old scholar or young student but has taken his beer-glass in one hand and his Homer in the other, and ranged himself under the flaunting flag of Klopp, or the blustering banner of Bopp. The light of Jena contends, on the one part, that Homer was a carcass-butcher at Chios; while the luminary of Heidelberg argues, with equal virulence, that the blind harper was a house-surgeon at Smyrna.

A good deal of outward courtesy has hitherto been maintained by both disputants; but in secret, Dreikopf, who has visited both camps as a strict neutral, confesses to us that there exists much bitterness of feeling and less restraint of temper than might have been expected between two such great scholars.

Bopp says to his students, "How can this fool, this Boeotian ox, deny that Homer never speaks of the cutting up of meat without showing a gusto, taste, and knowledge, unobtainable by any one unless he had been a practical butcher? Let the atrocious ass refer, if he choose, to the Ninth Iliad, verse 270. The ninnyhammer will there see that when a Greek deputation is sent to Achilles to try and win him back to the allied army, Patroclus takes three chines (pig, sheep, and goat), and transfixes and divides them with a discriminating skill worthy of any flesh-market. Let the swollen bull-frog of Heidelberg dulness also turn, if he can read pure Greek well enough, to the First Iliad, verse 600, where he will find the Greeks who sacrifice the hecatomb to appease Apollo, severing the thighs of the oxen and wrapping choice morsels for the gods in the double caul."

Such are a few of Bopp's learned arguments, and Bopp is very convincing indeed until you hear Klopp. That star of Heidelberg talks most irreverently of his adversary. "Culmination of pedantry!" he sometimes says, as if Bopp were actually present in the lecture-room. "How can he talk to me of butchers and such plebeian vul-

garity, when he sees that in his battles Homer always wounds his heroes in the most learned and anatomical way? Storm and weather! Are we to be dictated to by these old jackdaws of Jena, who think that the church belongs to them because they chatter on the weathercock? Does not Homer, in the Thirteenth Iliad, verse 812, make Merion slay Harpalion the Paphlagonian by a thrust under the hip bone and through the bladder? Does he not (idiot) represent Thoas killed by Antilochus (accomplished blockhead) by a javelin that cuts the hollow vein that extends to the neck along the chine? And again I ask (wooden brains) does not King Hypenor fall, in the Thirteenth Iliad (five hundred and twentieth verse) pierced through his liver? Endless, indeed, are the ways in which this divine medical man inflicts death on the dummies or minor personages of his great poem." So far Klopp, who is irrefutable till you hear Bopp. But, indeed, though there is more acuteness about Klopp, there is more grasp about Bopp. If Klopp be more vigorous, Bopp is more refined. Klopp is the luxuriant summer meadow, Bopp the rolled velvet lawn. If Bopp steal on with his fertilising stream, silent and unobserved as the subterranean New River, Klopp rolls on, broad, open, and generous as the Thames, but, like that river, stained here and there by the dead dog of prejudice and the floating cat of professional envy. If Bopp rise like a skyrocket, Klopp remains longer in the air. If Bopp blaze brighter and more like the violent Vesuvius, Klopp, like the wax candle of society, burns longer and clearer. Bopp's theories astonish, but Klopp's are read with perpetual delight. In fact, whether Klopp has beaten Bopp, or Bopp has pounded Klopp, it will take many centuries and many hogsheads of ink to settle.

Madame Dacier (that learned lady of Languedoc, who translated Iliad and Odyssey), was of opinion that there was no allusion in Homer to any way of cooking except roasting! From this some critics as hasty as Madame have argued that at the time of the siege of Troy the Greeks had no fire-proof vessels. In the Ninth Iliad, however, where Achilles feasts his unbidden guests, Homer especially says that Patroclus put by mutton and goat's flesh to roast and boil, while a fat shoulder of pork was being got ready for the spit; or, as old Chapman rhymes it, in his grand, rumbling, rough way:

Automedon held, while he pieces cut,  
To roast and boil, right cunningly; then of a well-fed swine,  
A huge fat shoulder he cuts out and spits it wondrous fine.

Another piece of evidence which shows that the Homeric Greeks boiled meat, is, that in the Odyssey, one of the insolent suitors flings the foot of an ox at Ulysses, whom he takes for a beggar on the tramp. Now, no people would ever have served up a roast leg of beef to table; or if they had, would they have left the hoof on? Whereas, boiled cow heel is dainty, gelatinous,

and nutritious. Madame Dacier's arguments are untenable; and we hereby (without arrogance) consign them for ever to the limbo of vanities.

It is the joint, the *pièce de résistance*, that constitutes the special difference between English and French cooking. The barbaric lumps of meat, such as the Norsemen carved with their walrus-horn-handled daggers, are the incarnations of discord which we and the French have long fought over. Ever since Mary de Medici's courtiers brought Italian cooking and the refinement of side dishes into France, the joint has been disregarded on the other side of the Channel. There are some bitter people, indeed, who say that the French are obliged to cook better than we do, and that the Frenchwomen are obliged to dress better; because their meat is so bad, and because their women are ugly. The less beauty, the more dress—the worse the meat, the more need of sauce. But this remark is grossly unfair, for the French beef, though not so exquisitely marbled as our own, nor so fat or tender, is often of good quality; and as for Frenchwomen, though we can scarcely be expected to allow them to be so beautiful as the English, they are so pleasing and so agreeable that they need no extraneous advantages, and could afford to despise the very cestus of Venus. But, there is no doubt, that however much the tastes of the two nations may once have harmonised, the tendency in England is to the one simple dish, and in France to a variety of savoury delicacies, often quite as pleasant and digestible as the solid slices of meat that the poorer Englishman affects.

The simplicity of taste (or the barbarity, which shall we call it?) must be inherent in our nature: it assuredly is not a question of quantity, for most Frenchmen eat more than most Englishmen.

It has been well said that a Frenchwoman is always cooking, while an Englishwoman leaves off her preparations for a meal till the last possible moment, and then hurries the roasting and gallops the boiling. Hence, arise failure and indigestion. Still this incontrovertible fact remains, that spite of all cooking you cannot in Paris get a rumpsteak that approaches the steak of a good London tavern. Ask for a "biftek" in the Palais Royal par exemple, and François, or Pierre, will bring you a little lump of beef of a pleasant savoury brown colour, a little crimsoned, embedded in crisp shavings of baked potatoes. You know that the white capped chef has longed to anoint it with sauce Robert, Sorel, Sharp, or Tomato, to remove its barbarous simplicity. It eats well and tender, but a little tasteless, and it is without much natural fat of its own, the Norman beast being of the lean kine genus, and by no means a bull of Bashan; you eat, and as you eat patiently, you ruminate on the past life of the unknown animal, part of which you are devouring. But a London steak is a far different thing; it is thicker, fatter, juicier, and of a rarer merit; it has been beaten worse than any Christian galley slave by the Turks,

and has been broiled with a learned and almost unerring instinct. It requires no effort of digestion, it melts in the mouth like a peach, passes at once into the blood, and goes straight to recruit the heart. It is a sort of meat fruit, and merely requires the soft pressure of the lips. Broiling, to tell the truth however, requires no common mind. To broil, is to perform an operation which is the result of centuries of experience acquired by a nation that relishes, always did relish, and probably always will relish, broils. It requires cleanliness, watchfulness, patience, profound knowledge of great chemical laws, a quick eye, and a swift hand. The Homeric heroes are supposed to have lived on broils, and this branch of cooking is deserving of the utmost respect.

A young cook should be always informed that it takes years to learn how to broil a rump steak; for a thousand impish difficulties surround the broiler, and do their worst to spoil the dainty morsel, and prevent its reaching the expectant jaws. If the gridiron be not bright as silver, and clean between the bars, the meat will suffer. If the bars be not rubbed with suet they will print themselves on the steak. If the fire be not bright and clear, there is no hope for the broiler. If the broil be hurried, it will be smoked or burnt. If the gridiron be overheated before the steak is put on it, it will scorch the steak. If the gridiron be cold, the part of the meat covered by the bars will be underdone. If the gridiron be not kept slanting, the constant flare and smoke, from the fat streaming into the fire, will spoil the steak. If no salt be sprinkled on the fire, the meat will very likely taste of brimstone, which the salt should exorcise.

Few people seem to know that rump steaks are not at their best, except from October to April. It is only in the colder months that they can be taken from meat hung at least four days to make it tender. When fresh they are mere fibrous masses of unconquerable grisly fibre. A good steak often turned to prevent burning, and to keep the gravy at the centre, takes ten minutes to broil. It should be eaten with a table-spoonful of warmed catsup, and a little finely minced shalot.

Mutton, says the eccentric Dr. Kitchener, requires a brisk fierce fire, quick and clear; but beef, a large sound one. To judge from Robert May's Accomplish Cook (1665), written five years after the Restoration by a man who had been apprenticed to the chefs at the Grocers' Hall and Star Chamber, and had afterwards officiated in Lady Dormer's kitchen, bастings and dredgings were thought of supreme importance in the reign of Charles the Second. May enumerates seven forms of dredgings, and six of bastings, some, perhaps, worthy of preservation. The dredgings are: 1. Flour mixed with grated bread; 2. Sweet herbs dried and powdered, mixed with bread-crums; 3. Lemon-peel pounded, or orange-peel mixed with flour; 4. Powdered sugar mixed with pounded cinnamon, flour, or grated bread; 5. Fennel seeds,

coriander, cinnamon, and sugar finely beaten, and mixed with grated bread or flour; 6. For young pigs, grated bread or flour mixed with beaten nutmeg, ginger, pepper, sugar, and yolks of eggs; 7. Sugar, bread, and salt mixed. For bastings: 1. Fresh butter; 2. Chopped suet; 3. Minced sweet herbs, butter, and claret (especially for mutton and lamb); 4. Water and salt. 5. Cream and melted butter (especially for flayed pig); 6. Yolks of eggs, grated biscuit, and juice of oranges.

The old rule of roasting and boiling is about twenty minutes to the pound; fifteen minutes is scarcely enough, especially in cold weather, in a draughty kitchen, or at a slack fire. The fire for roasting should burn up gradually, and not attain its full power until the joint is approaching perfection. Boiled meat cannot boil too slowly. Boiling wastes less of the meat than roasting. Beef, by boiling, loses twenty-six and a half per cent; by baking, thirty; by roasting, thirty-two per cent; boiling is also, though less savoury, a more economical way of cooking, as the water used receives the gelatine of the meat and makes an excellent basis for soup, which it is mad extravagance to throw away. The charm of a roast joint is the beautiful pale-brown colour. The sign of a roast joint being thoroughly done (saturated with heat) is when the steam rising from it draws towards the fire.

In the old cocked-hat times, when an inn kitchen was the traveller's sweetest refuge, and the sight of the odorous joint revolving majestically on the spit was one of the most refreshing of landscapes—in those distant ages, when the postilion's whip sounded frequently at the inn door, and the creaking of the inn sign was tired nature's most grateful lullaby—the red-faced choleric cook made great to-do with her steel spits and pewter plates. Those were hard times for the kitchen wenches, the scullions, and the turnsip dogs, the latter of whom used often to hide when they saw the meat arrive at the kitchen door. The jack had to be scour'd, oiled, wiped, and kept covered up. It was in those days that Swift, in his droll bitter way, advised the cook to carefully leave the winders on whilst the jack was going round, in order that they might fly off and knock out the brains of half dozen of those idle, thievish, chattering footmen who were always clustering round the dripping-pan.

It was Swift who also enriched our literature with a rhyming recipe to roast mutton. It is a pleasant banter on the stultifying love verses and pastoral songs of Queen Anne's time:

Gent'ly stir and blow the fire,  
Lay the mutton down to roast,  
Dress it quickly, I desire,  
In the dripping put a toast  
That I hunger may remove—  
Mutton is the meat I love.  
  
On the dresser see it lie,  
Oh! the charming white and red,  
Finer meat ne'er met the eye,  
On the sweetest grass it fed.

Let the jack go swiftly round.  
Let me have it nicely brown'd.  
On the table spread the cloth,  
    Let the knives be sharp and clean,  
Pickles get and salad both,  
    Let them each be fresh and green ;  
Now small beer, good ale and wine,  
O ye gods, how I shall dine !

Mr. Gay the poet—that plump good-natured man whom everybody loved—also tried his hand at the same branch of literature. He sent some portly, clerical, not unappreciative, friend of his, this recipe to stew a knuckle of veal :

Take a knuckle of veal,  
You may buy it or steal,  
In a few pieces cut it,  
In a stewing-pan put it ;  
Salt, pepper, and mace  
Must season this knuckle.  
Then what's joined to a place (salary)  
With other herbs muckle  
That which killed King Will (Sorrel, his horse),  
And what never stands still (time),  
Which much you will mend if  
Both spinage and endive  
And lettuce and beet  
With marygold meet.  
Put no water at all,  
For it maketh things small,  
Which, lest it should happen,  
A close cover clap on,  
Put this pot of Wood's metal  
In a boiling hot kettle,  
And there let it be  
(Mark the doctrine I teach)  
About—let me see—  
Thrice as long as you preach ;  
And skimming the fat off,  
Say grace with your hat off,  
Oh, then with what rapture  
Will it fill dean and chapter !

Both these sets of verse probably, (certainly the latter) were written to friends, and have all the careless freshness and ease that might be expected. Mr. Sydney Smith wrote a recipe for a winter salad, which is a highly finished piece of Popian verse. It begins :

Two large potatoes passed through kitchen sieve  
Unwonted softness to the salad give.

It contains some weak lines, and some which are exquisitely worded.

These are two of the best :

Let onion atoms lurk within the bowl,  
And, scarce suspected, animate the whole.

And it ends with a verse of admirable and heroic grandiloquence :

Serene full the epicure may say,  
Fate cannot harm me, I have dined to-day.

It has been often disputed whether a continued diet of beef or of mutton would soonest grow intolerable. We give our black ball with the firmness of an ancient Roman, against beef. The more mannered a meat is, the sooner it grows wearisome. Do we not all remember how the old indentures of Newcastle apprentices always contained a clause limiting the number of salmon dinners? The poor lads would

have pined away upon a delicacy that never changed. But in spite of this fact, Eton boys, who are very injudiciously fed too often on mutton, always delight in that meat in after life, which seems to us a proof of its untiring savour and gusto. Mutton, Ude says, is more frequently served at dinner than any other dish, not that it is half as fine flavoured as kid or fawn, but then it is our adopted meat, and can be so easily disguised and transformed. The most imperial way of serving up lamb for a very great dinner, where a central and lordly dish is required, is thus given, and under a most quaint title, by Lord Sefton's chef. "A ROAST BEEF OF LAMB" he styleth it. "Take the saddle and the two legs of a lamb, cut out of the middle of each leg a small rosette, which is to be larded, as also the fillets. Roast the whole, and glaze the larded parts of a good colour. Serve up with gravy (mint sauce in a boat), or in the French manner, with maître d'hôtel sauce—i.e. béchamel sauce, fresh butter, parsley, salt, pepper, and lemon-juice."

And now with all the promptitude of our nature, to a financial question. Does the price of meat, as charged to a diner at a London eating-house, bear any faint relation to the original cost price of the joint? We determined to benefit the world by an experiment that would at once settle this question. We directed our cook to buy a sirloin of beef weighing eight pounds: cost, at tenpence a pound, six shillings and eightpence. This was cooked. When it was cold we set to work, and, in the true spirit of the philanthropist, cut it into what in dining-rooms they call "plates." We found that it cut into eighteen fair plates, which (if the tavern-keeper did not get the beef cheaper than we did) would yield a profit of two shillings and fourpence only—a far less profit, we confess, than we had expected.

As we have in our comparison of beef and mutton perhaps rather run down our ancient and truly English friend beef, and elevated mutton at its expense, let us make the amende honorable by a final fact which redounds to the credit of the national dish. The late Duke of Norfolk used seldom to eat less than three or four steaks at the club over which he often presided. The great man always used to assert that every steak had a physiognomy of its own; and that although the club dinners always consisted of steaks, yet that no dinner ever quite resembled its predecessor. One night, the ox was from some special county; another night, the cook was in good humour, and excelled himself; a third time, the meat had been kept to the very hour, and was done to the very turn. He also considered that in the middle of the rump "there lurked a fifth essence, the perfect ideal of tenderness and flavour." For this he always tarried and recruited his forces, fortified by his second bottle of port. It was reported by the scandalous that the duke always preceded these dinners at the "Steaks" by a secret preliminary dish of fish. They say it was a grand sight to

see the rosy duke (his orange-coloured ribbon and silver gridiron, not yet assumed) listening to one of Captain Morris's sparkling Bacchanalian songs, rubbing meantime a clean plate with a fragrant shalot, preparatory to his third steak, in front of the gridiron-grating through which the cooks were seen at work behind that portcullis: over which was inscribed the apt quotation from Macbeth,

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly.

#### POOR RELIEF IN AUSTRALIA.

In providing for our poor, we in Australia have the advantage of being without tradition. We have no venerable schemes to abandon, no rare old abuses to get rid of. Beardedom is unknown. We therefore start fair. But in this land of gold and plenty, where we buy a leg of mutton or a dozen of peaches for a shilling, can there be poverty? Well, yes. The poor are still in our land. Doubtless all classes of labourers are much better off than at home; we always call England home. But there is poverty, and that, too, to some considerable extent. In the unsettled state of our population, men change continually their places of abode. So it happens that careless husbands leave their wives and families without means of support. Again, in our mining districts accidents are of far too frequent occurrence. In many different ways the bread-winner is suddenly cut down. Moreover, even in this splendid climate men and women do grow old, and, from some cause or other, have made no provision for declining years. They, too, must be supported. Lastly, there is drunkenness, which here, as everywhere, adds not a few to the list of those who receive charitable aid. In the great metropolitan gold-field, Ballarat and surrounding district, out of a population of a little over sixty thousand, some seven hundred per week receive aid from a public institution.

What that public institution is, and how it does its work, we propose now to tell.

Poorhouse or workhouse are still names unknown in Australia. Our institution is called The Benevolent Asylum, and every true Australian prays that the time may never come when our children shall forget the sacred claims of charity, and put their trust in poor laws and workhouses.

Before relief can be given, the wherewithal must of necessity first be got. We have no poor rates. How, then, is money obtained? Last year the public gave us in subscriptions two thousand one hundred and eighty-two pounds, and the government supplemented it by a grant of four thousand pounds, so that we have an income of six thousand one hundred and eighty-two pounds, besides payment from government for deserted children and other items, making altogether about eight thousand pounds. Money being provided, the next question is, who is to

spend it? Every year a president, treasurer, and committee of sixteen gentlemen, are selected by and out of the subscribers of one pound a year or upward. This is the staff of managers, and the whole power is placed in their hands. They are unpaid, and conduct the rather laborious business of the institution as a work of love. Our building stands in a reserve of about six acres; it is built in the Elizabethan style, and has cost about sixteen thousand pounds. There is accommodation for nearly three hundred inmates.

Let us go over it. We enter a spacious waiting-hall. To the left are apartments for women and children, master and matron's rooms, kitchen, laundry, &c. The centre and right are appropriated to men, including a large sick ward. The first room we enter in the centre, is the men's dining-room: scrupulously clean, light, and pleasant. Used also for religious service. Down a passage we find the men's sitting-rooms; the older men in one; the younger in the other. That tall old man fought at Waterloo, and there, too, is one of Nelson's heroes. There are Scotchmen playing draughts, and there is a Frenchman playing a fiddle. On the table are the daily papers, several English papers, magazines, &c. A Chinaman and a New Zealander are admiring the last number of the Illustrated London News. Some are reading novels, some are discussing politics, some are simply enjoying light, air, cleanliness, and human companionship.

Sleeping wards are up-stairs. Each inmate has an iron bedstead, mattress, blankets, and white counterpane. At the head of each bed is a neat wooden chest, serving as a seat and a receptacle for clothes, and other private property of the residents. Over some of the beds you may see photographs of loved but lost or far-distant friends. The master can be, and very frequently is, communicated with at all hours of the night. Go into the grounds; there we have, first, a flower-garden radiant in this autumn month of March with fuchsias, pelargoniums, geraniums, roses, dahlias, gladioli, lilliums, petunias, &c. On each side are vegetable gardens with all ordinary English vegetables, magnificent vegetable marrows, cucumbers, tomatoes, &c. It is very seldom that the first prize for vegetables at the Horticultural Society's shows is not taken by the gardener to the Benevolent Asylum. His prize vegetables are consumed in soup, and are in various other ways disposed of by the inmates. Here may be seen sundry old men and others who can do a little work, earning extras in the shape of plugs of tobacco and pats of butter, by digging, weeding, or generally making themselves useful. In the centre of the vegetable garden one cannot fail to see a good-sized arbour covered with Banksia and other roses. This—oh, Mr. Bounderby, is not this turtle soup?—is the smoking-room. Old men, who have smoked all their lives, must smoke; hence, all over fifty are allowed a plug of tobacco weekly; and other tobacco may be

earned, as we have seen, by garden labour, shoemending, tailoring, or mattress-stuffing. We have no square, high-walled, gravelled yards; we believe that even the poor may have aesthetic tastes, and if they have not, we do not see how virtue can be helped, or vice hindered, by positive bare God-hated ugliness. We fancy—mistaken in our youth, it may be—that that “contentment” which an old book tells us with “godliness is gain,” is best promoted by the sight of God’s fair works, and that those perhaps who have never thought of Him may begin to see him in a garden—in brick walls and spiked tops never. Besides, for those who want facts, our beautiful garden pays, and pays well. Last year our vegetables, taken at market prices, were worth one hundred and forty-nine pounds nineteen shillings and threepence, besides what fed cows and pigs, which useful animals cleared two hundred and fourteen pounds two shillings.

Cross the gardens, and you find our school-room and playgrounds. Our school is under the Board of Education. In Victoria we have a system of government secular education, of a first-class ordinary English character. Look at our children: plump, rosy, and decidedly jolly. At home they would be thought well-dressed children of the better sort of mechanics. They have swings, gymnasium, cricket, tops, and other such follies. As you walk through with the master, you see that the children are not afraid of him—that they bring their grievances to him with an unlimited belief both in his power and intention to see the right thing done.

Next let us pass into the quadrangle at the back. Here are the kitchen, laundry, drying-room, bath. The inmates’ clothes are duly washed every week in winter, and dried by hot air; in summer with the thermometer from ninety to a hundred degrees Fahrenheit, they dry fast enough. On Saturday, shirts, socks, and the like, neatly folded, are placed in the chests before mentioned in the sleeping wards. In the bath-room there is a fine plunge; the men have the use of it twice a week; the boys, any day; and a fine sight it is to see the youngsters taking headers and swimming gloriously. Workshops for those who can do a little mattress-making, shoemaking, or tailoring; cowhouses, pigsties, and earth-closets; complete our survey.

Returning to the house through the kitchen, we may inquire as to food. For breakfast, coffee and bread; those who have earned it, have butter. Dinner, either basin of soup and six ounces of boiled meat free from bone; or half a pound of roast meat, with vegetables when in season, one pound of bread, and potatoes at discretion. We find it better to put the potatoes and bread on the table, indeed actually cheaper, than to portion it out, for there is not so much waste; those who only eat little, only take little, and no one can say they have not enough. The meat is cut up into equal portions in the kitchen for convenience’ sake. Tea as breakfast: sound tea, and not coffee. The bread is all the best

wheaten, the meat first quality; which is, after all, not saying much, when our present contract is for prime beef twopence, mutton one penny three farthings per pound. Two members of committee, appointed in rotation and for a fortnight at a time, visit the asylum, inspect the stores, hear complaints if any, and see that all is as it ought to be. The master and matron have three hundred pounds per annum, with board, lighting, fire, and quarters. The work of the house is done by paid servants. We do not forget the religious and moral welfare of our poor. Free in this land from a state church, and where there is perfect religious equality, we could not appoint any chaplain, but the voluntary principle works well. Good friends of various denominations hold a Sunday school every Sunday afternoon. The inmates go to what place of worship they please, on Sunday morning; in the afternoon there is a service conducted by the Wesleyans; on Friday afternoon the Episcopalians have service; on Tuesday afternoon the ministers of most of the other denominations conduct service in turn. Attendance is optional. By way of amusement, occasional lectures; or should dissolving views, or Lancashire bell-ringers, or such like, visit the town, very frequently they come up and give an entertainment to their poor brethren.

But the sick ward must not be forgotten. Here every attention is paid to our paupers. We get those who are turned out of the hospital as incurable, besides those who fall sick in the house. Take up the doctor’s book, and, for the benefit of some English poor-house, copy:

A. T., beef-tea, wine, and soft fruit daily.

S. M., ice (a luxury in Australia), eggs, and wine.

S. H., soft fruit, sago, porter.

Our doctor seems a great advocate for soft fruit, by which term, at this present, peaches, grapes, pears, apples are meant. Eighteen eggs and a bottle of wine, with sago and arrowroot, is a favourite out-door prescription. Horrid mixtures in blacking-bottles are unknown.

Who are admitted to our asylum? All who really need such home; neither creed nor clime makes any difference. Any man or woman who can’t get a living, and whose friends can’t or won’t support, we admit. Our object is stated to be: “To relieve the aged, infirm, disabled, and destitute, and to minister to their necessities according to the ability of the institution.” The limits are simply want, on the part of the applicant; means, on the part of the asylum. Either the general or the house committee meet weekly to receive and deal with applications.

We have said nothing yet of out-door relief. Many require help who cannot be admitted into the asylum—families and so forth—and these constitute the out-door part of our work. Every Wednesday, the master serves out rations to such applicants according to the following scale for each adult: six pounds of bread or five pounds of flour, four pounds of meat or two and a half pounds of rice, a quarter of a pound of

tea, a quarter of a pound of coffee, three-quarters of a pound of sugar; for each child bread and sugar only. Any of these things can be changed for oatmeal, arrowroot, sago, and so forth, if required. Extra rations for sickness according to doctor's orders.

The town is divided into districts; to each district two members of committee are appointed, who have to visit the recipients of relief in their district, and report on the cases to the general committee at least once a month. Special orders in cases of necessity can at any time be given by members of committee to poor in their own districts. Such orders are available for two weeks, after which applicants must appear, or their cases must be reported on to the committee by the person granting the order. The president can at any time grant relief, or admit in urgent cases. We thus try to avoid all unnecessary routine while guarding against imposition, and the self-respecting poor have not to be badgered by heartless officials, but state their case to gentlemen who know how to respect poverty.

Thus it is that we treat our poor in Victoria; the Ballarat Asylum is a sample of many others. We have not yet learnt that poverty is a crime. There is no doubt we are sometimes imposed on; but it is far better that some rogues should be kept by our generosity, than that our fellows, Christian or not Christian, should bear unmerited suffering which it is in our power to alleviate.

#### LAST OF OLD STORIES RE-TOLD. THE ACCIDENT AT THE BRUNSWICK THEATRE.

On the morning of the 25th of February, 1828, there was a great hammering and sawing at the New Brunswick Theatre, Welleclose-square, Whitechapel, as the house was to be opened that evening. The theatre had been run up in seven months by Mr. Stedman Whitwell, C.E., and it had a ponderous iron roof and a facade, the design of which had been borrowed from that of San Carlos, at Naples. It stood on the site of the old Royalty Theatre, opened in 1787, under the management of John Palmer. Lee, Lewis, Bates, Holland, and Mrs. Gibbs were then of the company; and that fine singer, Braham, made his first appearance on its stage, in the character of Cupid. It was originally intended for the performance of legitimate five-act pieces, and had opened with *As You Like It*; but, the patentees of the other theatres memorialising the Lord Chamberlain, the new theatre was tyrannically restricted to pantomimes and burlettas. The original theatre had been burnt down in 1826.

From the first opening of the Brunswick Theatre, a vague sense of danger had filled the minds of every one connected with it, except the proprietors: who were too eager for profits to listen to anything that might cause delay. A Mr. Pulsford, employed to survey and measure the work of the smiths, carpenters, and bricklayers,

had repeatedly, even from the beginning of January, warned Mr. Maurice, one of the most active of the proprietors, of the insecurity of the roof, and of the danger of suspending heavy weights from the iron ties or chord bars. He had told Mr. Maurice (a bustling self-sufficient man, by trade a printer, in Fenchurch-street, who had from the beginning run counter to the wishes of the architect) that there was danger, and that it would be well to consult some scientific and practical men. He proposed Mr. Bramah, a civil engineer of Pimlico, and Mr. Moorman, an eminent smith in Old-street. Mr. Maurice declined, and one day came to the theatre and read to some of the workmen a letter from the contractors of the roof, dated Bristol, which said that the roof would bear any dead weight, if it was perfectly steady.

Mr. Shaw, the carpenter who built the stage, had felt an insurmountable alarm, which various small circumstances had tended to heighten. There were forty or fifty men hammering, sawing, planing, and gluing, in the carpenters' shop, which was attached to the new roof. On (Monday) the opening night, a small but ominous accident also occurred, which struck terror into the minds of two or three intelligent overseers.

The crowding of above one hundred persons in the O.P. flies, which were hung by iron crooks to a plank that lay edgeways on the ties of the roof, suddenly made them sink about two inches. The plank had fallen flat, the hook had slipped, the rod had fallen with all its weight on the wing groove, and prevented the scenes from working. The actors were already putting on the last touch of paint, the orchestra had begun, the audience were subsiding into their places. Mr. Whitwell, alarmed, called Shaw, the carpenter, and questioned him. Shaw said that he thought some gasfitter, in putting up his tubes for lighting the wings, had let his plank fall on the grooves.

The curtain must rise soon, so Mr. Whitwell, the rather incompetent architect, said, in a flurry:

"Come up the fly, and I'll go up with you."

They went up, but found no plank. Mr. Whitwell then said to his reluctant and hurried companion:

"Now, Shaw, whip over; get upon the groove, and see what is the matter."

Shaw did so, and, after peering about a few minutes, cried out:

"Eh! Gad! there is one of the iron straps of the roof dropped on the groove. But I'll soon adjust that, with the pole from the carpenter's shop."

Whitwell said: "But, Shaw, the curtain is going up in a few minutes, and you are wanted below."

Shaw then came down, and gave orders to a man named David Wales to fix the tackle and free the scene, and they then lashed the tackle together to prevent its slipping.

In the mezzanine gallery Mr. Whitwell met his old opponent, Mr. Maurice, told him of the

accident and the means used to remedy it, and advised him to have it looked to the first thing in the morning. In the mean time, a spectator of trained powers of observation and great experience had also augured mischief, and given a warning.

Mr. Clarkson Stanfield, the eminent scene-painter of Drury Lane, and afterwards a great marine painter, had been introduced by Mr. Carruthers, one of the proprietors, to the architect, with a request that he (Mr. Stanfield) would show him the internal arrangements of Drury Lane, where the carpenters' shops and flies were affixed to the roof, but were also supported by strong underlying beams running from the posts of the proscenium to the back walls. Mr. Stanfield's quick eye saw the lower fly give way. He spoke to Shaw, and asked if it could not be propped up? Shaw said every plank had been taken away. Mr. Stanfield then said to Mr. Whitwell, who was at the back of the stage: "Does not this alarm you?"

The architect replied (and this seemed his great self-deception all through):

"I have nothing to do with that part of the business."

Mr. Stanfield replied, in his sailor-like way, "Oh! The deuce you haven't!"

On the Tuesday, so far from being lessened, the weight attached to the roof was recklessly increased. About a ton weight more of benches, &c., was carried up from the theatre to the carpenters' shop, by tackle fixed to the roof. There were then eight men in the painters' and forty men in the carpenters' shop. On this as on a previous occasion, Mr. Whitwell flew into a violent passion about the danger of the pendent and vibrating weight. He told Mr. Carruthers that he had first observed the strain on the roof on the 15th of February, while inspecting the ventilating apparatus.

Mr. Carruthers or Mr. Maurice answered angrily:

"We know what we are about, Mr. Whitwell. We don't proceed without advice. We have written to Bristol, and have got permission to hang as much weight to the roof as we like, provided it be a steady weight."

When Mr. Whitwell left, Mr. Carruthers scolded Shaw, and asked him if he (Mr. Carruthers) was his master, or Mr. Whitwell? He (Mr. Carruthers) was as good an architect, on his own behalf, he said, as Mr. Whitwell was, and he could manage the men, and he was as good a carpenter as Shaw himself.

Shaw then told Mr. Pulsford, who was also alarmed, that the timbers were not yet struttied, and said that, when they were, the carpenters' floor would not vibrate. Mr. Whitwell had previously agreed with Pulsford about the danger of overweighting the roof, but had said it was a matter over which he had no control.

On this same Tuesday, the P. S., or prompt fly, also settled about half an inch. On the Wednesday, Shaw, the clerk of the works, told Mr. Carruthers that two uprights must be fixed at the end of each fly, as the flies were too heavy for

the roof. Shaw then ordered two men, named Mills and Davidson, to go to Jones's timber-yard and cut two uprights, seven inches square and twenty-two feet long. They were also to cut holes in the floors, to discover at what point the uprights could be best fixed.

On this same Wednesday morning, Mr. Carruthers (a haberdasher in Gracechurch-street) had been told for the first time that the flies had sunk. A man named Blamire told him secretly (West being jealous of the proprietor's interference with the architect, his employer) that the roof had warped. He then told Shaw to get supporters for the flies. Shaw replied, there was no danger, but it should be done. At about a quarter past five, Carruthers, dining at Maurice's, felt uneasy about the roof, and, when the cloth was drawn, slipped out to the theatre. To his surprise, all was dim and silent, and the porter told him that Shaw had knocked off the men and gone to Vauxhall. He wanted the porter to find out the carpenters, and bring them at once to put up the supports; but the porter said it was impossible then to find them out and collect them. Mr. Carruthers returned home uneasy. On the Thursday morning he went down again and expostulated with Shaw, who said it was usual to knock off early on the Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent; and that there was no danger, or his wife would not be at that very moment up-stairs, stitching canvas. The supports were then preparing.

On the Thursday morning a rehearsal had been called, of Guy Mannering. Mr. Manning, the Dominie, Meg Merrilies, the terrible Dirk—were all on the stage or at the wings. The stage-manager was reviewing and scolding his troops; the gentlemen in the orchestra were bending over their music, or extracting extraordinary experimental notes from their instruments. All was cheerful bustle, hope, and excitement. There were about twenty-four persons on the stage or behind the scenes. Mr. Fearon, the conductor, was in the orchestra, arranging and giving out the music; and immediately before the orchestra, in the first row of the pit, sat his two sisters, as spectators.

There were two stage boxes close to the proscenium, fitted up for the proprietors. Of these, Mr. Maurice was to have one, and Mr. Carruthers the other.

Mr. P. Farren, the stage-manager, was sitting on the front of Mr. Maurice's box, and Mr. Maurice was standing close before him. Mr. Maurice had just put a farce, called The Poachers, into the stage-manager's hand, saying: "I should be glad if this could be done on Monday, it is a piece likely to do us a deal of good."

While they were still talking (it was then about twenty-five minutes to twelve o'clock), a strange noise was heard above, like a slight crash of timber. It sounded like a beam which some carpenters had let drop, and, as builders' workmen were still in the theatre, no one paid any attention to it. Another similar sound

came, and was also disregarded. The third seemed to shake the chandelier, and was accompanied by a discordant rumbling noise that lasted several seconds. The next moment Mr. Farren, looking up to see where the noise came from, saw the chandelier in the act of falling. Obeying the momentary instinct, he threw himself under shelter, and clung to a pillar of the proscenium. Mr. Maurice rushed to the centre of the stage. The roof came down; an avalanche of iron instantly tore walls and gallery down with it, and swept before it scenes, stage, orchestra, boxes, and actors. It was a tornado of girders, bricks, and timbers. A cloud of dust hid the scene of death for a moment. When perception returned, Mr. Farren found that the pillar opposite to that part of the box to which he clung alone remained: the rest was a mountain of confused ruin. On a sudden he saw something move in the rubbish near him, and Miss Yates, a girl of about twelve years of age, daughter of Mrs. Vaughan, the leader of "the tragic business," made her way towards him, her head streaming with blood. She cried: "Oh, Mr. Farren, save me!" Farren dragged the poor girl over the box, though by no means certain of his own safety, and urged her to thank the Almighty for their preservation. They remained in that place blocked up for nearly half an hour. After this awful interval of continued fear, he saw three or four of the carpenters, their faces bloody, wading and clambering among the ruins to gain the street; for the front wall had fallen, and there was a passage left, though a dangerous one. Farren called to them, rejoicing that others also had escaped, congratulated them, and inquired if the danger had quite passed, and if his present retreat was safe. They answered, he was tolerably safe; but another wall might soon fall, and if the beam which had defended him then gave way, he must be instantly killed. He then felt he had no time to lose. He broke quickly out of his extraordinary prison, struggled with difficulty through the ruins with the little girl (whom, we believe, he eventually married), and escaped without injury. Once to his horror, on looking down, he found he had set his foot on the face of a dead man, a Mr. Gilbert, a fellow-actor, whom he recognised.

Mr. Maurice had almost escaped, when he was killed in the street, close to his own house. He had darted to the extreme line of the falling fragments, when a torrent of bricks struck him obliquely on the head, beat him to the pavement and buried him, all but one foot, which Mr. Campbell, one of the performers, recognised. His body was instantly dug out. It was lying with the head towards the theatre, and was on its stomach. The watch in the pocket was still going. The corpse was first identified by the handkerchief in the coat. While the crowd was gathering, Mr. Maurice's wife came crying, "Where is he? Take me to him. Let me see his dead body!" But some friends, passing by in a coach, prevailed upon her to leave the spot.

The escapes were all remarkable, and varied in their character. Mr. Goldsmith, one of the

company, was speaking to Mr. Wyman, another actor, at the time, when by an indescribable presentiment he removed to the right-hand stage-box, exactly opposite where Mr. Farren was sitting. At that instant the lustre trembled, and the crash followed. His first feeling was to rush into the street, but nevertheless he stood paralysed till the ruins fell. He then leaped into the stage-box, where a large beam, forced down by the weight of the galleries, formed a defence against death. He saw the roof sink, with dreadful noise and confusion, and bury his friends. While struggling through the ruins, he shouted for help, and two sailors rushed in and assisted him to escape. Outside the ruin he met Mr. P. Farren, Miss Yates, and Mr. Wyman. Mr. Farren cried out to him:

"Good God, Goldsmith! have you escaped? We are the only persons who are left to tell the story. Let us fall on our knees and thank God for his protection."

Another escape was scarcely less miraculous. Shaw and his wife were employed in the counting-house, forty feet above the stage, and in an instant found themselves below the stage, with a large plank lying across their bodies. Releasing himself and wife from this plank, the man carried his wife up a staircase still standing, and having gained a window, lowered her into the street by means of a rope, and then followed. They were both much bruised, and were at once carried to the London Hospital.

Mr. Carruthers at the time of the accident was sitting on a chair on the O. P. side of the stage. His legs were crushed by the ruins, but he was extracted in about an hour and a half, with the loss of his shoes, stockings, and small-clothes. One of the actors, hearing the walls crack, and seeing the chandelier loosen and drop, by an instinctive effort reached the door, and rushed into the street about a second before the roof fell in. A moment afterwards he heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded and dying. He was too terrified to give the alarm when he fled, and was so panic stricken that he ran onward without thinking of what he was about, till he reached Covent Garden Theatre, where he had a relative performing. He remained there for a short time in a state of great agitation, then returned to the dismal scene.

Mr. Dillon, an actor, threw himself out of a window at the first alarm, and as he alighted was all but overwhelmed by the falling rubbish. He called loudly for assistance, but the persons near were afraid to venture, till one or two of the more daring ran in and rescued him. Lynch, the pantaloons, seeing the wall crumbling under the roof, and the latter sinking fast; took a flying leap through a window into an adjoining yard; and fell upon his legs and escaped. Joseph Roberts, a smith, was at the time, with a man named Purdy, fixing a hand-rail to a geometric staircase leading to the dress boxes. They heard a noise, when Mr. Purdy caught him by the hand, and said, "Come, Joe, it's all over." They ran to the door, but could not open it: but Roberts forced it with

a chisel. When they reached the street, the two men were separated by the falling of the portico, which killed Mr. Purdy and buried Roberts. When the latter was dragged out, his shoes and stockings had to be left behind. Another man, named George Hoare, observed the wall giving on the Tuesday, and thought the house would fall. Just before the accident he saw the wall "go out" about a foot. As he was preparing to collect his tools, he was carried away to the bottom of the house, and remembered nothing more until he awoke in the London Hospital.

The indirect escapes were numerous. Mrs. Vaughan, the mother of the little girl whom Mr. Farrer rescued, had been sent for by the manager, but did not attend, as she had been at all the previous rehearsals. Mr. Campbell, one of the actors, had been to the rehearsal, when he remembered Mr. Maurice had asked him to deliver a note in the neighbourhood. He had not got ten yards from the door before a terrible crash made him look round, and he saw the beautiful building he had just quitted, a shapeless heap of ruins. Mr. Finley, the scene-painter, who was in his room over the stage, fell with tremendous violence; but in his descent he stuck in the balustrade of a staircase that led from the stage to his room, and was miraculously saved. Mr. Saker, a low comedian, his wife and child, were half an hour late at rehearsal, and were within a few hundred yards of the theatre when it fell. Mr. Adcock, the prompter, had just arrived at the end of Grace's-alley, in Wells-street, directly opposite the theatre, when he saw the immense building sink under the heavy roof. He ran back up the passage, but was for some time speechless.

The front wall fell on the house of Mr. Blatz, a baker, in Wells-street. Mr. Blatz heard the crash of the roof, and had time to escape before the wall fell and partly destroyed his shop.

The dead were dreadfully mutilated. Mr. Evans, the editor of the Bristol Mercury and Observer, a friend of Mr. Maurice, and who was conversing with him a few minutes before the accident, was struck by a ponderous beam on the forehead. His body was for some time taken for that of Evans, one of the doorkeepers. Leader, a carpenter, was struck by a beam from the circular boxes as he was in the act of escaping from the workshop, and was found dead, jammed against the staircase, a hammer still clenched in his right hand.

Mary Anne Fearon, a little girl, one of the leaders of the ballet, who was on the Thursday night to have performed in the Fatal Prophecy, was dreadfully crushed, and her head almost severed in two. Penfold, the doorkeeper (a superannuated clerk in the London Docks), made a desperate attempt to escape. His body was found on the steps, with the head towards the street, and the legs upward.

The wall that fell in Wells-street destroyed two houses opposite: a public-house and a

baker's: and it also crushed a passing dray and two horses from Elliot's brewery. A gentleman passing, had a mass of ruins fall on one of his legs; but, by a tremendous muscular effort, drew out his foot and left his boot behind. A poor old-clothesman, named Levi, from Petticoat-lane, was reading a play-bill on an opposite wall, and was crushed by the falling ruins. His friends could only identify his body by the Table of Laws (a sort of Jewish talisman) which was found attached to his breast next his skin. The unhappy wife of this poor man became insane from grief.

In all, thirteen persons perished by this accident, and about twenty more were hurt and wounded. The street rumour at first was that one hundred performers had perished, besides one hundred spectators in the pit. Had the house fallen on the opening night, some three thousand persons must have been slain.

Soon after this terrible affair happened, a party of labourers were sent by Mr. Hardwick, the architect, then constructing the St. Catherine Docks, and he himself superintended their zealous labours. They gradually cleared away the immense mountain of bricks and broken timber, beneath which the sufferers' cries could still be heard at intervals. Towards night the men became so exhausted that they had to discontinue their search, in spite of the tears and entreaties of persons in the crowd whose relations were still missing.

At last a brave sailor, thinking he heard some one moaning in a specially dangerous part, procured a torch, forced an opening, and let himself down into the chasm. There was a deep and solemn silence enforced during his chivalrous search; but he found nothing. On Friday, more bodies were dug out; on Saturday the digging was relinquished: Mr. Hardwick himself having searched the vaults beneath the orchestra, pit, and stage. The ruin was singular in appearance. The boards of the stage, pit, and stage-boxes, were cracked into pieces, and formed a sort of rude arch. The iron roof lay like a network over the centre of the mass, and had entangled itself with the timber. It was especially noticed by the crowd that the walls were tall and slight, and that the mortar, not yet dry, had scarcely left a mark upon the bricks. The place was visited on Friday by vast crowds, including the Duke of Argyle and many persons of distinction, on whom the pick-pockets made great havoc. One Jew-boy was heard to boast that he had made forty handkerchiefs that day.

On the Thursday week after the calamity, a public meeting was held in the London Tavern, the Lord Mayor in the chair, to set on foot a subscription for the sufferers. Alderman Birch, the celebrated pastry-cook, Sir G. Smart, Mr. Charles Kemble, Mr. Elliston, and Mr. Fawcett were present. The Duchess of St. Albans (always generous to the members of her old profession) subscribed one hundred pounds, and the Duke fifty. The secretary's statement showed what terrible suffering the accident

had caused to many clever industrious, and struggling families. Miss Freeman, a dancer, and one of the sufferers, had been sent on the stage by her parents, who were servants, and who had pinched themselves to provide her outfit. Her landlady, who was going to bury her at her own expense, was a poor shipwright's wife, with four small children. The wounded persons also suffered terrible loss. Nodder, the box-keeper, had lost one hundred and forty pounds from the previous theatre being burnt, and had paid Mr. Maurice one hundred pounds for his situation in the Brunswick Theatre. Mr. Harris, the stage-door keeper, who had his leg broken, had a daughter hurt. This girl had been a music-mistress, and had supported her father, and had got him his situation. Mr. Maurice had held two-thirds of the property of the theatre, and his family was totally wrecked by the loss. About seven hundred and fifty pounds were subscribed in the room.

The day after the accident, a meeting of the performers at the Brunswick was held at the Black Horse, in Wells-street, to ascertain who was missing. The muster-roll was read, and there was a terrible silence when the names were called.

The inquest on the bodies was held at the Court-house, in Welleclose-square, before Mr. Maurice Thomas, the coroner.

The evidence all went to prove the strange infatuation with which the proprietors, blindly eager for reimbursement, had hurried forward to their ruin. The clerk of the works, the surveyor, the architect, all knew that the roof was settling down. The property-man was so sure of it, that he had determined to quit the theatre. A gentleman who came to the play on the Tuesday, and found that the box-doors would not shut, suspected danger, and left the theatre. Another person, on seeing the front wall bulge on the Tuesday, would not enter, but returned home. Only on the Monday, the principal carpenter of Drury Lane Theatre had pronounced that the walls were not strong enough, or the cement dry enough, to support an iron roof weighing, with its adjuncts, sixty tons.

The inquest continued till the first week in April. The evidence of all the witnesses was characterised by recriminations, pitiful evasions, and some falsehood. The architect was anxious to show that he had warned the proprietors; the surviving proprietor was desirous to prove that he had never been properly warned; the builders tried to convince the jury that they had built the place firmly and well. The contradictions were sometimes palpable, as when Mr. Whitwell declared he had never been warned of the danger, whereas he himself actually gave in evidence that he had been up in the flies on the Monday night to examine the cause of their sinking. Mr. Carruthers, too, was so nervously anxious about the flies that he had ordered them to be propped, and yet had had no surveyor to advise him as to the safety of the roof.

The eventual verdict was, "Accidental death by the fall of the roof of the Brunswick Theatre, which was occasioned in consequence of hanging heavy weights thereto; and the jury are of opinion that the proprietors are highly reprehensible in allowing such weight to be so attached. And we fine, in each of the two cases, a deadand of forty shillings."

A scientific writer of the day, reviewing the causes of this accident, says it was a very hazardous experiment to construct walls eighty-eight feet high, and one hundred and seventeen feet in length, unsupported by transverse ties, and only two and a half bricks in thickness.

During the building of these walls, their vibration, and that of the scaffolding, had been so great, that tie beams had to be thrown across the building from wall to wall to keep them steady. These ties, when the roof was laid on, were sawn away, leaving a clear parallelogram one hundred and seventeen feet by sixty-two feet. It must be remembered, too, in extenuation of the architect's remissness, that iron roofs were little used in 1828. Mr. Carruthers had never seen one at all till Mr. Whitwell had taken him down to the Deptford Gasworks and showed him one, and there told him that if the building were ever burnt down, the roof would be worth two-thirds of its original price. Some years before an iron roof at Messrs. Maudsley's, in the Westminster-road, had broken down the building, and this should have been a warning well known to Mr. Whitwell as an architect.

This terrible accident occupied the public mind so entirely, that for some time it effaced even the controversy as to the justice or injustice of the then recent battle of Navarino. The survivors published pamphlets, and a poem was written on the subject. Learned editors also discovered a passage in Tacitus which described a similar accident at an amphitheatre at Fidena, and in which fifty thousand persons were either killed or maimed.

#### WALLACHIAN PEASANTRY.

Two people wonderful for their grimness; two people living in a hole; half in the ground and half out of it; are Wallachian peasants. They are small, they are dark, they are shiny in patches, they are beautiful. Their large, dark, soft eyes are full of unspoken poetry and kindness; and their language, very peculiar in its cadences, is all vowels—soothing, luxurious, musical. They live partly under ground, for warmth in winter, and because digging a deepish hole in the ground saves much expense of building; not that building in these countries is very costly. Mud and straw, such primitive bricks as the Israelites made for Pharaoh, all squashed together without form or shape, are Wallachian building materials. Their idea of architecture is equally primitive: not extending, as a rule, much beyond the British infantine conception of a mud pie. An irregular oval with a hole at the top, a mush-

room same size all the way down, that is the Wallachian idea of architectural beauty. A traveller requires to come pretty close to a village before he can reasonably indulge the thought that he is near any human habitation. When there he looks around, and is bound upon the testimony of his senses to suppose that he has suddenly arrived among a colony of Lilliputians. The inhabitants, of whom he does not see a single one, have all run into their holes and concealed themselves at his approach, for fear that he should be some Government official of despotic proclivities on a taxo-flogging expedition. Experience has rendered them tolerably subtle in such cases. They scent the tax-gatherer from afar. The first field labourer who sees him from a distance, hastens homeward, and the whole village hides. Everything the peasants possess, disappears at once in holes of the earth. They hide their corn, their cheeses, such few spangles and ornaments as serve to array them on weddings and festival days, and they conceal their young women most jealously of all. Then they prepare to abide the event, whatever it may be. They are a timid race; a race of so timid and yielding a character as never to stand up against oppression and front it boldly. When they are beaten, they howl and cry for mercy; they do not kick, but it is absolutely astonishing how much beating they will consent to take, before anything is to be got out of them. They are shrewd calculators, and weigh thumps against ducats with a calmness which would astonish a hot-blooded Briton not a little. The scourge has been too familiar an object to the Wallachian peasant for centuries, to have any shame whatever attached to its smart. He is not bold, indeed, in the sense of offering any resolute resistance to tyranny; but if a tyrant wants to kill him he can die in a soft, yielding, lumpish sort of way, with howls.

His mind is a queer puzzle; his views of education are strictly limited. The village priest, who is his sole instructor, does not possess scientific or literary information of much more extensive character than he himself does; but now and then they hold a hazy sort of discourse together upon spiritual affairs, which are rather of a distasteful character to him, the peasant. He observes, not without certain sly commentaries of his own upon the subject, that the priest invariably gets the better of him on these occasions. He finds that promises of future rewards and blessings appear to depend on his being ready, on the shortest notice, to do the priest's work instead of his own. He notices that such promises may be bought with commodities of any nature useful to the priest; and he fancies that he remembers a blessing having been administered to him by the reverend gentleman on one occasion when his wife deemed it highly expedient, from some unknown reason, to box his reverence's ears. On the whole, he has not much respect for the priest—who is a peasant, like himself, as his father was before him, the priesthood being more or less an hereditary calling—but though he

has not much awe or love for ecclesiastics, he has a mighty great esteem for his church. In the first place, it is probably the only decent weather-tight house he has ever seen; and it is usually decorated with an imposing splendour calculated to enlist his sympathies and to startle his imagination. Its internal decorations would be remarkable for their magnificence in any country. Its walls are covered with pictures, and the pictures are all ablaze with gold and jewels. Even the martyrdoms of the saints are represented in the most agreeable manner, and if it be necessary to depict a holy personage as undergoing the process of broiling, after the manner of St. Lawrence, it is satisfactory to observe that his sufferings do not appear to be in any way unpleasant to him, and that, on the whole, he appears rather to enjoy them. The church is to the Wallachian peasant everything which is represented by the church and the theatre combined, in other countries. When a poor, half-starved, miserable man, with no human joy in this world but now and then a drink of corn spirit, leaves his earth hole for a gorgeous edifice, of which the air is laden with incense, no wonder that he is powerfully affected. Thus he delights in saints' days and religious ceremonies. While heartily despising and suspecting the priesthood, he eagerly welcomes every opportunity of visiting the church; and although he would not be averse to a battle of wits, or even a bout of fisticuffs with the parson, every thread in his gorgeous robe of office is hallowed in the peasant's eyes. The ceremonies of his religion are as sacred to him as its ministers are indifferent, or even despicable; and, once past the porch of his temple, he casts himself upon the ground and kisses the stones in fervent worship.

Intelligent, argumentative faith he has none. Any person, clerical or otherwise, who presumed to differ with received opinions would experience little consideration or mercy. Religious heresy is the only thing that would rouse active resistance in the soft apathetic nature of the Wallachian. Of course he has not the faintest idea of the tenets of his faith. He would fight and die for them, but he does not know what they are. In so far as he has any thought at all about other worlds, his imagination runs riot in vague poetic dreams. He believes in the devil as a personage who has a very intimate acquaintance with human affairs and takes an active part in the ordinary business of everyday life. He believes in all manner of secondary spirits and aerial unseen influences. Above all, he believes in the existence of spirits who keep watch and ward over hidden treasure, and wander about mountains and pathless moors in search of travellers to befriend or punish in accordance with their caprice. His songs and his legends all dwell reverentially upon such themes. The favourite personages of a Roumanian story are a beautiful maiden, forlorn and benighted in a forest, pursued by some persecuting demon, and deli-

vered from death and bonds by a valiant horseman passing by at an opportune moment, or attracted to her rescue by spiritual influences. The horseman always has golden hair and a radiant face, enchanted arms, and a steed fleetier than the wind. The demon flees at his appearance, and he bears off the beautiful captive to his home, and receives a kingdom for her dowry. Another fancy of the Wallachian peasantry is that every leaf and flower has life and immortality. They suppose that leaves and flowers are the habitations of imprisoned souls, and their songs upon this subject have a freshness and pathos hardly to be found in the popular ballads of any other country. The Wallachian doine, or folk lore, has something of an Ossianic character; but, instead of representing the thoughts of a stern solemn people living in a misty mountain-land, it breathes the ardent spirit of a southern race, inhabiting a delightful climate, beautiful with purple skies and gorgeous flowers.

Between the imaginative and the actual life of the Wallachian peasantry there is a dark and dreary gulf. The British traveller experiences considerable difficulty in disconnecting their personal appearance from that of chimney sweepers. Their neighbours, the Russians and the Turks, are both bath-loving people. The Turks are scrupulously and delicately clean. Cleanliness is a part of their religion, and is an inborn want and necessity of most of the Oriental races. But the Wallachian peasant never performs any sort of ablution, from the cradle to the grave. Water is often a scarcity in the Roumanian villages; but the peasant who inhabits the banks of the Danube is quite as dirty as his fellow-countryman who resides in the interior. The meanest hut in Turkey proper has appliances for washing; the hovel of the Roumanian peasant has none. In Turkey the women of the meanest household may seclude themselves in some sort of decent privacy. Not so in Roumania. The Wallachian peasant, his family, his pigs, a few dogs, and perhaps a sick pony, live all together in an oblong hole, with an opening at the top to let out the smoke and another to creep through when they would go abroad. The Turk loves light and air; the Wallachian lives in utter darkness.

He is quite as unlike his Russian neighbour. A Wallachian peasant will get drunk now and then, but drunkenness is not by any means his habitual vice. His idea of earthly felicity is to lie down on his back in the sunshine, with a select circle of female acquaintances, and drone out songs through his nose, with his eyes shut. He will pursue this entertainment with great industry and enjoyment for many hours at a time, if left uninterrupted in the peaceful exercise of his natural inclination. He is perhaps sensual, but his sensuality is of a peculiar kind, and is not at all coarse or gross like the sensuality of the bumpkins of the north and west. It is chiefly made up of laziness. He delights in being idle. Of the pleasures of eating he has

no conception, and is as lean as a herring. A dozen Wallachian ploughmen have not a pound of fat among them, and hardly an ounce of muscle. They are soft, flabby, loosely made creatures, of whom an Englishman of ordinary physical force could tie a dozen by the heels together with a wisp of hay.

If a strong man collar one of these people in anger, the creature seems to shrink and shrivel in his sheepskin, and cannot well be grappled. A generous man would no more strike one of them than he would hit a child. They are great liars, and apt enough to make busy folk who have anything to do with them rather angry. But when caught in any trick, their great tender appealing eyes and quaking limbs plead too successfully to permit indignation to take an active form of hostility. There seems something softening and enervating in the moist, warm, marshy air around them. Even the wolves, who are fierce in Russia, are cowardly, tame, skulking brutes on the Lower Danube, fit merely to carry off a pet lamb, or an invalid gosling. The horses, so spirited and strong in Hungary, and so fine in Turkey, are but scraggy dejected little brutes in Roumania, rarely above twelve or thirteen hands high, and quite unfit for the saddle. Everything in these countries seems equally enervated and spiritless. Hunting and shooting, among the most boisterous of sports in other places, are but tame, gentle sort of craft in Wallachia. The principal game is the bustard: a gigantic species of wild turkey, which has now almost disappeared from the British islands, but is still found in great abundance among the interminable bogs and marshes of the Danubian Principalities. This bird (who revenges himself with great ceremony upon his human persecutors, by presenting the toughest flesh ever penetrated by mortal tooth), is held in great esteem, and every one who has a gun, devotes a portion of his leisure and energies to the pursuit of this indigestible game. But, instead of putting on a pair of double-soled boots and leather gaiters, and striding off boldly after his birds, the Wallachian sportsman lies down in a cart, and causes himself to be driven into a bog: where he waits until some misguided bustard comes near, and then leisurely takes a pot shot at him.

The surprise of a covey of English partridges at seeing a person coming after them in a four-wheeled waggon, would doubtless be considerable, but it probably does not astonish the bustards who have been accustomed to accept martyrdom on those conditions, from time immemorial. The marsh lands of the Lower Danube are among the best shooting grounds that advancing civilisation has left in Europe. They swarm with incredible multitudes of wild-fowl of every description. Ducks and geese, now grown rare in Western Europe, are met with in such numbers as to look like clouds in the air, when upon the wing; and in some parts of the country, hares and partridges are equally numerous; while snipe may be shot as fast as

a keen sportman can load his gun to knock them over. But the Wallachian peasant, though he has seldom anything to eat, beyond a little maize pudding, or black bread and onions, with a few grapes now and then in the vintage season, does not take the trouble to trap game. In the immediate neighbourhood of the few large towns, such as Bucharest, Yassy, Giurgevo, and Craiova, a few hares and partridges with now and then a bustard or a woodcock, are brought lazily to market and sold for a few pence. The want of railroads or rapid communication of any kind has hitherto left these vast game preserves unremunerative, though very lately some few birds have begun to find their way to Paris, carefully packed in wheat—which is found to be an excellent preservative against decomposition. The Wallachian peasantry seldom think of eating any of the abundant food within their reach. They are simply too idle to go after it. If now and then in winter time they find a hare half crippled by the frost, they have a queer way of cooking him in quick lime, and will sometimes take the trouble to pick his bones; but not often. If the Wallachian peasant be called upon to choose between rest and food, he chooses the former. The most peculiar and interesting class of the Roumanian country people are the gypsies, who are found in great numbers throughout the Principalities. Their women are singularly graceful and lovely; their men are the same sort of agricultural thieves as elsewhere. Both men and women pretend to supernatural powers, and practise the arts of sorcery and divination, sometimes with enough success to impress the unreflecting not a little. They have unwritten laws and traditional customs to which they adhere very strictly; and they are looked upon without any unkindness by their neighbours.

The favourite amusement of a Wallachian boyard when he visits his estate, is, to send for the nearest band of gypsies, whose songs and whose dances are sure to amuse him, and have truly a racy charm about them. The gypsies are the best farriers, cattle doctors, and horse buyers in the country. It is not good to offend them, but they are harmless and kindly-tempered when unmolested.

#### A WOMAN'S JUSTICE.

##### IN EIGHT CHAPTERS. CHAPTER V.

WHEN the gentlemen returned to the library they found Cecil seated, Major Middleton's desk open before her. She was very pale, but her hands no longer trembled, nor did her voice falter. She recalled, in a few sentences, her brother's last words—how, in the first instance, he had exacted a promise from her to destroy without inspecting, *everything* contained in that desk; and how that, afterwards, in one of those violent fits of irritation to which he was subject—more than usually increased by the knowledge that Mr. Chester had been in the house—he had forced a promise from her that she would read

whatever she found there. Then, unfastening the secret recess, she produced the miniatures, letters, and marriage certificate.

It was curious to observe how Mr. Cathcart warmed to his work the moment he scented a mystery. He looked at the miniature; he had known Cecil and her brother all their lives. "No possible mistake," he said, "as to who is the gentleman; but who is the lady?"

Cecil placed the certificate before him.

The lawyer scanned it without, and then with, his spectacles, and passed it to Mr. Chester, simply saying, "Awkward!" He then read the letters. Nothing could be gathered from the expression of his countenance, as one by one, after asking Cecil if he were to pass them on to Chester, he did so.

"The witness Dacre?" inquired Mr. Cathcart, carelessly.

"Is drowned—dead."

Mr. Cathcart twirled a pen.

"There!" he said; "you have obeyed your brother's last injunction, and now you can obey his first. These papers need give you no uneasiness."

"True," said Cecil. "I have simply to seek out my brother's wife and child, and resign to them what I imagined, until this evening, was mine."

Mr. Cathcart laid his two hands firmly on the edge of the table, fixed his eyes steadily on Cecil, pushed himself back in his chair, while Cecil spoke. She became deathly white, but there was no tremor in her voice.

Ronald Chester moved, as if he were going to place his hand on those of Cecil, which were clasped together on the table; but he did not do it.

"My dear Miss Middleton, my dear young lady," said Mr. Cathcart, "you cannot, surely, be serious? Any woman can sign herself 'your affectionate wife'; and the major must have had strong reasons—strong cause, indeed, against this—person to have written these denunciatory words across so fair a face."

"When men are tired of women they write anything," said Cecil.

"As to the certificate, it may be only waste paper," persisted Mr. Catheart.

"It is my duty," said Cecil, "to ascertain whether it is so or not."

"You may depend upon it, if the case is tangible the woman will see to it."

"Suppose she is dead; who is to see justice done to my brother's child, if I do not?"

"Believing the child to be your brother's, which might be questioned."

"I thought of that," said Cecil. "But from these letters, you see, the fact must have been admitted."

"Really," and Mr. Cathcart smiled, that peculiarly doubting lawyer's smile, which seems to have been patented by the profession; "Really my dear lady, you seem very anxious to get rid of your good fortune."

Cecil shivered from head to foot. She returned the melancholy gaze of Ronald's eyes

with an intense look of love. When she could command her voice, she said :

"Justice costs me very dear, but I must render justice."

Mr. Cathcart shrugged his shoulders, and inquired "To whom?—To yourself and my friend here, or to these mysterious personages, whose very existence your brother evidently desired to ignore, until seized upon by—by—Well, no matter. But he made no provision in any way for this *wife* and *child*."

"His injustice could be no excuse for mine."

"What do you purpose to do?"

"I fear," answered Cecil—and now her voice faltered, for she was well-nigh worn down by contending emotions—"I have nothing to propose—no *plan* to set before you; but I wish to discover Mrs. Middleton and her child. You will know how to set about it. I also wish those documents copied, I retaining the originals. I want this done at once, and I have not strength to copy them myself; the last four or five hours have unnerved me."

"You had better speak with Miss Middleton on this subject before it goes any further," said Mr. Cathcart, rising. "I will wait in the next room."

For some minutes no word passed between them. Ronald Chester stood beside the one love of his whole life, and she laid her head on his bosom, sobbing that dry, hard, tearless sob of agony which can be felt and heard, but not described.

"It was a dreary duty," she whispered, "and oh the cruelty of leaving me such a task! Ronald, my love, my life, you know what is my duty."

"Clearly, Cecil," he replied, "clearly, you are doing what is right, and what is honest. My noble Cecil! Never so fondly loved, never so highly honoured, as at this moment when we are torn asunder!"

With a sharp cry Cecil sprang to her feet, threw back her head, and to the last day of his life Ronald never forgot the light bursting like a sudden glory through her tears.

"No, Ronald, not that. If my brother's marriage were legal, and his child lives, I cannot prove my love and homage by making you master of Middleton Lea. But"—and here the heroine melted into the woman, and proved how one of her brother's poisoned arrows rankled in the wound—"you will not forsake me, Ronald; though I am faded, our love is unfading, we will go together to the New World: that will be our harbour of refuge, there we will love and live and toil together. Did you think I would let you go alone?"

#### CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Ronald Chester sought Mr. Catheart, he found him in a state of excitement and exasperation wonderful to witness.

"I never," said the worthy lawyer, "met with such an absurd case in all my experience. Chester, I have known you from your boyhood, a capital common-sense fellow, and as honour-

able as man could be, you surely will exorcise this romantic spirit out of Miss Middleton? Now, don't speak; if that hard-hearted scoundrel her brother had considered his marriage worth a straw, he would not in the first instance have determined to destroy its evidence, knowing the woman would crop up. It was one of those entanglements of which I dare say he had plenty, but which he did not believe in, if he had, the boy—his own boy! but I dare say he did not believe in him either. All I would entreat of Miss Middleton to do, is to let the matter rest. If there is a wife she will be certain to make her appearance; let her bring forward her claim, and then it is for us to dispute it."

"I know Cecil's sense of justice," interrupted Mr. Chester. "If the wife is living, she would, I think, ere this have made a claim. If she does not come forward, Miss Middleton will believe she is dead, and will seek the child, of whom she will consider herself the natural as well as the lawful guardian."

"Lawful fiddlestick!" exclaimed the lawyer, thoroughly irritated. "I beg your pardon, my dear Chester, but I can't help it. This is simply a question of law. Of course you can influence Miss Middleton. She has no right to know anything about that wife and child, until a proper claim is made."

"But she *does* know it," said Mr. Chester, calmly, "and I know *her*. If she can find that child, and he is legitimate, she will retreat on her five thousand pounds."

"What madness! Give up all claim to that noble property—to what?—to whom? Give up her love for you—"

"No, my good friend, that has nothing to do with property, except the property we have each in the other."

Mr. Catheart paused, and stared at him.

"All I ask is to let time and the law take its course; let Miss Middleton remain as she is; take no steps to discover the child or the woman; can she not give the law fair play?"

"Cecil does not think of law, she only thinks of justice," said Chester.

"That's an unfair hit," replied Mr. Catheart, "but I tell you the case will not hold water. She seeks to convert a fiction into a fact. Major Middleton's death has been in all the papers, he has been buried more than a month. If there had been a wife, she would have been heard of before now."

"Let us say good night now, and meet here to-morrow," said Mr. Chester.

"Very good. I need not see Miss Middleton again to-night. Make my respects to her, tell her neither men nor women ever did any good by taking the law into their own hands. All I ask of her is to let matters have their course."

But Cecil would not do that. She would not even go to Middleton Lea until every possible means had been used to trace the woman and child, whom she felt assured had been foully wronged.

If those who do not believe in the nobility of soul that makes man, only "a little lower than the angels" could have seen the earnestness with which Ronald Chester entered into Cecil's views and seconded her endeavours to trace the unfortunate woman who, either with or without cause, had been abandoned by the man who had sworn to protect her—they might have been cured of an infidelity which is alike an insult to the created and the creator.

Mr. Cathcart confessed that, insane as they both were, their insanity had done him good.

"My belief, sir, is," he said, when talking the case over with a professional friend (for it had "oozed out" and become matter of interest, either as something to praise or blame, but at all events, something to wonder at and talk about), "my belief, sir, is that Miss Middleton will have as much happiness in what she considers 'rendering justice' as she would have had in taking possession of Middleton Lea. Now, suppose this child is discovered—which I devoutly hope it never will be—with a dancing or a singing woman for its mother—that exquisite, delicate creature, and that high-hearted man, will set off to the New World, calling themselves (and at their age too, for the lady is past thirty) rich in each other's love. Yes, and believing it, too; *believing it, sir!*

"Miss Middleton, sir, is the victim of the wildest dream of justice, that ever disturbed a woman's brain! All I entreated of her, was, to wait until the wife made a claim. It is not one woman in ten, who understands reason; but what makes the matter more aggravating, is, Miss Middleton *does*—on every subject but this. I am very glad that such justice is not contagious, for if it was," concluded Mr. Cathcart, taking off his spectacles, and speaking in a confidential low tone to his friend, "as Ronald had the truthful impudence to tell me, there would be an end to law. However, sir, for all that (this is strictly between you and me), it does one good to see that noble woman's disinterestedness, and know that it is real, and true. It is more refreshing than a cruise to Norway in the long vacation! Selfishness, sir, is the curse of this age of electro-plate and stucco, and yet here, sir, are a full grown man and woman, who have no idea of the sensation!"

Certainly Mr. Cathcart had never so unwillingly placed himself in communication with the police as he presently proceeded to do. Cecil, not satisfied with what she believed would be the coldness of his instructions, saw the detective officer who was to be employed in this delicate investigation, and quickened his perceptions with the hope of a handsome reward if he succeeded. Of course she was beset with friends and advisers, who held with Mr. Cathcart, that it would have been wiser to have taken possession, and waited. It was astonishing how all degrees of "friendliness" encircled the heiress and her betrothed—every suggestion being "for her good." She listened with

the calm and gentle courtesy inseparable from her nature, but remained firm and faithful to what she considered justice.

#### CHAPTER VII.

Hours and days passed anxiously and heavily, bringing hardly any information from the detective officer who accompanied the lawyer's clerk in the search which Cecil had so promptly determined upon. One week they were in Scotland; next week, they were drifting from one to another of the Channel Islands, after what seemed to all but Cecil a forlorn hope. Yet the fact of the marriage, and the fact that a child was born, seemed established—to the great disgust of Mr. Cathcart. A clue gathered up in Guernsey sent the two men to Baden-Baden, whence a strange wild story was transmitted to their employers. This story was to the effect that, at what they called "a grand hotel," Major Middleton's last visit was perfectly remembered. He was accompanied by a delicate blue-eyed blonde, as tiny and fantastic as a fairy, and who sang like an angel; but who, one night after a concert, disappeared with a Russian tenor, who married her next morning. This did not disconcert the major in the least; during the whole of the following day he was the gayest of the gay at all the places

Where men do congregate,

and patronised the Russian tenor's next concert in a very liberal manner. He had created too marked a reputation for eccentricity during former seasons, to admit of the possibility of a mistake as to his identity.

The beautiful blonde (thus the story ran on) had made a confidante of the lady who sat at "the receipt of custom" at the hotel, and had assured her that, even if he had been a free man, nothing would have induced her to marry "cette sauvage magnifique, Major Middleton." She had made that little excursion with him from sheer pity. "Madame Middleton," whom she described as being fierce as "Vesuvius," "dark as night," and in bad health, had altogether made life so triste for the poor major, that in pity she gave him a little variety, but to marry him!—it would have been too absurd—"he had not a note in his voice!" Of course inquiry was made if this person had stated where "Madame Middleton" was? Somewhere in Scotland, the signora had said. The officer had been there; had traced the bride and bridegroom to Oban and into the wilds of Arasaig, where the latter had established renown as a fisherman and cragsman, daring and doing what the Highlanders could not achieve. Cecil's cheek paled, and her tears fell at the record of her brother's vices; but her eyes brightened when she found his feats of courage and strength unforgetting.

The lady's beauty was also well remembered, and even in those early days of wedlock, the mistress of the hotel at Oban had observed, that "they were not that loving together as might have been expected, seeing they were just wed. The lady, 'a foreigner, poor body,' cried a deal,

and the gentleman never heeded. She was 'aw-some' too, sometimes, in her tempers, and she" (the landlady) "was sorry for baith." It would seem that Major Middleton soon wearied of his wedded life, for the next time he was traced—there were now no footprints of his wife—he reappeared at Baden. It was evident that he had left the lady he had married, and that he had conceived a violent hatred towards her. One of the major's brother officers, hearing of the investigation, called on Mr. Cathecart, and suggested that perhaps she might be discovered in a lunatic asylum, for the major once, and once only, had mentioned to him what he called his "miserable marriage" (they had been close comrades as brothers during the Crimean war), and had distinctly stated that she was insane. "But surely," Cecil said, "if that were the case, there would have been some trace of the fact—she must have been paid for in some asylum. And the child! Her brother could not have left his own child without provision."

Instead of enlightening, this communication perplexed, even the keen-witted lawyer. So confident did Cecil become that both mother and child were alive, that she prepared for her intended emigration, making all necessary arrangements for the well-doing of Middleton Lea—as though she were its agent, not its owner. Gradually her friendly advisers dropped into mere acquaintances—hardly that. She had cast herself from her high estate by her own act, and out of the established mode and circle of her race. She was monstrously eccentric. Some whose advice had failed to make an impression on her, considered her conduct as an unmarried lady highly indelicate.

Then Mr. Chester's friends gradually cooled down to nodding and "how-d'y-e-doing," and in course of time became near-sighted when they met him. Some declared they thought a man little better than "a fool" who could not manage to make a woman who loved him, do anything he pleased; others sneered at the poor-spirited idea of giving up such a place as Middleton Lea! when any fellow with common sense could have "turned the wind." A few above the common herd understood and appreciated Cecil's justice, and respected Chester for the freedom of heart and conduct he awarded to his betrothed. His independent spirit yearned to be the architect of its own fortune, and he would have accepted hers, only because he could not have had her without it. There are some such nobly loving hearts still in the world, thank God!

Mr. Cathecart at length declared that every thing had been done that could be done, that every stone had been turned that could be turned, except one: an advertisement for the missing ones might be inserted in the newspapers; but Cecil shrank from *that*, it was such an exposure of her brother's vices, such a reflection on her brother's memory. She dwelt with intense pain on what she felt to be a thousand times worse than the suffering her brother's selfishness and caprices had obliged her to endure—the heartlessness and cruelty of thus

abandoning his wife and child. His hardness, his tyranny, his bitter taunts, were all buried with him; but this living proof of a thoroughly heartless nature wounded her beyond endurance, and ate into her heart.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### WINTER WAS

##### "Lingered in the lap of May."

Cecil believed as firmly as ever that her brother's wife and child would be discovered, and as firmly as ever refused to assume a position to which she had no claim. Time was passing, and Ronald Chester must either go abroad or relinquish the prospect that promised brightly for the future.

It was noon, the noon of what would be a long sunless day, calling but faint odours from the early flowers; the wind wavering between east and west; little grey clouds drifting beneath a hazy sky.

Cecil's first act when she entered the library was to shut down the window, and, though the room was due south, to draw up the blind. There was no sun to exclude. The fatal ebony desk stood in its old place. She drew a chair to the table, arranged paper and envelopes, and sat, pen in hand, not writing, but looking upward as if awaiting help to arrange and express her thoughts.

Suddenly her reverie was broken by a knock at the door. South, her old faithful servant, in answer to his mistress's "Come in," entered, and, white and trembling, advanced to the table and grasped the back of a chair with both hands, looking earnestly at her.

"What is it, South? Why do you not speak?"

"In a minute, Miss Cecil. Just one minute to get my breath and set how to begin. I don't see how to believe my eyes or ears. I wish Mr. Chester was on the spot, and Mr. Cathecart says to me, as if I did not know it, 'Miss Middleton is an angel,' he says; 'only she shouldn't go against the nature of things, South, he says—'"

"Never mind what Mr. Cathecart said, South; that cannot have agitated you."

"No, Miss Cecil; but he's below; he is in my pantry this blessed minute. I know he is; for he has as many turns in him as an eel; so, to make sure, I lock't him in, and there's the key," added South, triumphantly: "the scamp!"

"Are you in your senses, South? Are you speaking of Mr. Cathecart?"

"No, ma'am; but my brain is moydered, and no wonder. It's that scamp of the world, Charles, Miss Cecil—Charles—Charley Dacre, that dared to say I was jealous of him—Charles, that knew all the ins and outs, the bads and goods, of him that's gone, that I told you was sent to America—the poor Master's pad-groom—and sure, if he had a mind to come from the bottom of the sea, where so many honest boys are drowned, he might have done it at once, and spared us all the trouble and bother we've had—not to count the expense,

and keeping you out of your rights. I never was glad to set eyes on Charley Dacre before, but the minute I saw him, I thought what was on the road, and that we should get the rights of everything at last. There's hardly an ounce of flesh on his bones nor yet a decent rag on his back, and he says he hasn't as much as would bury him!"

"South," exclaimed Cecil, breathlessly, rising from her chair, "I do not care to hear that; I want to hear about my brother's wife; he was present at the marriage?"

"He was, miss, and at something else too; only sit down, dear mistress, till I get out what—May I be forgiven for it, I'm a proud man to have heard! He was present at the poor lady's funeral, and, what's more, he saw the last of the child, which died before its mother; and the mother never riz her head after that, nor says Charley Dacre, went into tantrums nor desperation, but settled into melancholy madness, and the major put her into a lunatic asylum, and paid for her handsomely, though he would never see her after the birth of the baby, which he disowned. And when she died she was buried with her child. Oh, Miss Cecil! sure it's not fainting you are?"

Cecil did not faint. She told South to get her a glass of water, and not speak again for a few minutes. When he left the room, her trembling heart echoed her murmured thanks-giving:

"Lord, I thank thee that my brother's memory is purified from the great sin that was pressing me into my grave!"

In less than two hours Charles Dacre was beneath the harrow of Mr. Cathcart's cross-examination, and the same evening the clear-headed old lawyer journeyed only a few miles out of London, to the asylum where the poor lady died, and to the churchyard where she had been buried in the same grave with her child. It is one of the unexplained readings of corrupt nature that the men who are most zealous and indefatigable in the destruction of female virtue are always the most violent against the woman whom they suspect of infidelity to themselves. Whatever cause produced Major Middleton's hatred of the woman whom he loved after his fashion well enough to marry, never came to light.

Dacre, when questioned on the point, only answered that Major Middleton was a very particular gentleman—very particular—especially when he began to get a little tired of a lady. But Mrs. Middleton was a foreigner, and as fond of liberty as the major himself, and very "wild-like" from first to last. He never knew who she was or where she came from. Master seemed to think a great deal of her at first, and at one time told him their next move should be to Middleton Lea; but they soon got to be very unhappy. She was the only

lady his master was ever afraid of. He used to swear she was mad; and so she was (Dacre thought) from the very first, off and on. Mr. Cathcart repeated this to Cecil, who entreated that no more questions should be asked. All that was necessary to be known, was known. Her brother had not deserted either wife or child, and the past should be buried with them. It was as dishonourable to pry into the secrets of the dead as of the living. Dacre should have a sum of money to enable him to go where he pleased, and she—*they*—would take possession of Middleton Lea after their marriage; that is, when they returned from their wedding tour.

The worthy lawyer astonished South by rushing into the dining-room, and shaking him by the hand; "as cordially," said South, when he repeated it in the pride of his heart, "as if I was a gentleman!"

"South," said Mr. Cathcart, "I look upon a faithful servant, as a family friend, and you have been in the family twenty years. My blood boils when I think of the wicked cruelty that obliged her to see those letters."

"He could not help it, sir," said South, "no more than a cat can help torturing before it destroys. To think of them two being children of the same parents, sir!"

"And to think now of her and her husband's long-deferred happiness, South. Heaven bless them both! Nevertheless, a word in your ear, South." The lawyer's eyes twinkled as he whispered it. "I hope I shall never have in my office, as long as I live and stick to business, another case of Woman's Justice, South!"

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